

COMPLETE NOVEL BY MARGARETTA TUTTLE } JULY, 1911
15 CENTS

AINSLIE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



July Contributors

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Concerning August Ainslee's

"Georgette" is the most delicious, sparkling and fascinating young lady that has lived in a manuscript for many a day. Marion Hill introduced her to us, and in August AINSLEE's we are going to introduce her to you. "Georgette" is a "complete novelette," we suppose, just as butterflies are "diurnal lepidopterous insects," but we prefer to think of them simply as "Georgette" and "butterflies." As a matter of fact it is fortunate that "Georgette" is a novelette. If she were the real live lady that Marion Hill has made her seem, universal peace would be farther off than ever, for, adorable as she is—but you will meet "Georgette," yourself, in August.

Constance Skinner's first novelette, "A Man and His Mate," attracted widespread attention when it appeared in March AINSLEE'S. The same author gave us "Divorced" last month. We have both of these powerful stories in mind when we say that we consider "The Law," to be printed next month, the biggest, strongest, most convincing piece of work that Constance Skinner has thus far turned out. She presents one of the greatest problems in modern marriage, the difference in man's point of view and woman's point of view, in a manner as interesting as her theme is important.

Kate Jordan contributes a mystery story, called "Mrs. Peacock's Shop," to this coming number. It reverses the usual order of things in detective stories, in that the characters do the work and the reader derives the entertainment.

Did the agent who rented you your summer place tell you, by any possibility, that no matter how hot it got in the middle of the day the nights were always cool? If the agent did and the nights are not, there are three delightful ways to keep from thinking of the agent: Let Frank Condon tell you the amusing history of "An International Affair;" lose yourself under the spell of Fannie Heaslip Lea's charming "Galatea of the Roses," or read George Hibbard's graceful explanation of how "The Cynic" lost his cynicism in spite of himself.

F. Berkeley Smith, Andrew Soutar, Jane W. Guthrie, Elliott Flower, Johnson Morton, William Bullock, H. Addington Bruce and David King are others who are prominent in making the August AINSLEE'S a magazine with neither "uplift" nor "let-down"—a magazine that really does entertain. It's just the sort of a magazine that "Georgette" herself would enjoy.



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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

VOL. XXVII

CONTENTS

No. 6

FOR JULY 1911

Cover Design	Ch. Weber Ditzler	
By the Gate of Allah. Complete Novel	Margaretta Tuttle	1
Her Chance. Short Story	William Slavens McNutt	33
The Ship of Dreams. Poem	Charles W. Kennedy	38
The Garden of Eden. Short Story	Herman Whitaker	39
Celia. Poem	Witter Bynner	48
Who Laughs Last. Short Story	Fannie Heaslip Lea	49
Adventurings in the Psychical. Essay XI.—Suggestion and Education.	H. Addington Bruce	56
Dropping Anchor. Short Story	Frank Condon	62
Wine. Poem	Clarence E. Swezey	68
The Girl and the Homestead. Short Story	Elliott Flower	69
The Man Who Could Not Love. Short Story	Anna Steese Richardson	77
Villa by the Sea. Short Story	F. Berkeley Smith	82
Love's Offering. Poem	Torrance Benjamin	91
Pilarcita. Novelette	Norval Richardson	92
The Things They Valued. Short Story	Jane W. Guthrie	106
The Crocodile Bracelet. Short Story	Churchill Williams	113
Miranda. Short Story	Georgia Wood Pangborn	121
Sunflowers. Poem	Clinton Scollard	128
By the Sign that Conquers. Short Story	Nalbro Bartley	129
A Song of Heloise. Poem	Theodosia Garrison	136
The Housekeeper. Short Story	Ellis Parker Butler	137
The Snow-blind Man. Short Story	George Hyde Preston	145
Give or Take. Short Story	Edna Kingsley Wallace	150
For Book Lovers		156
Talks With Ainslee's Readers		159

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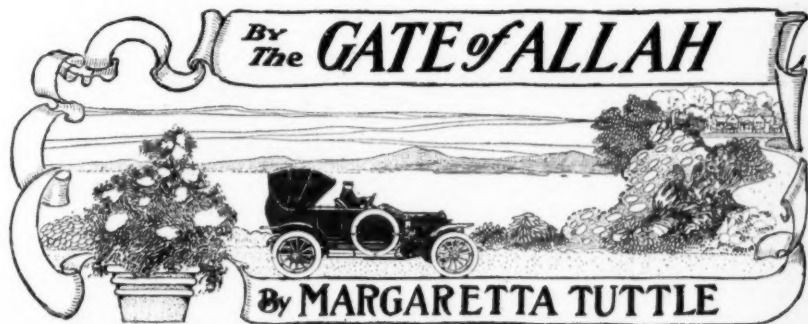
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VOL. XXVII.

JULY, 1911.

No. 6.



CHAPTER I.

CLAUDA, deft and careful, lifted the gray-blue gown from the chair where it had been flung, hung it carefully on a rack, and covered it with a silken bag marked "Embroidered Crêpe Robe—Paquin." The mirrored door beside her unclosed at the pressure of her hand, and displayed dozens of such bags, all sending forth a faint fragrance, all carefully marked. She hung the rack on the rod of the cupboard, and picked up from the floor near it gray-blue silk stockings and blue slippers; then she paused, for through the door of the adjoining room there came a low sound, almost like a moan.

Holding the stockings, Claudia moved nearer the door, softly and silently, and looked at the figure in its exquisite morning embroidery, huddled in the big cretonne chair before an untasted breakfast set forth in silver and glass.

There was nothing about the figure that Claudia did not know, from the cloud of bronze hair she kept simply

coiffed to the little, silken-shod feet that trod such curious paths.

Six years ago she had been engaged by the Carson housekeeper, to be ready when the Carson bride came home from her wedding trip, and she had been told that the new Mrs. Carson had been a girl in moderate circumstances, who had married the possessor of many millions suddenly, and would probably not know how to dress herself or comport herself, and that her maid's tact and ability in such a situation were what would hold it for her. She had found tact unnecessary and ability accurately measured. The bride's gray-blue eyes looked her through briefly, and approved. The softest of voices gave accurate orders, and suffered no slipshod interpretation of them.

It was no part of Claudia's service to like the woman she served. If it is an exceptional man who is a hero to his valet, it is a more exceptional woman who is beloved by her maid. But there were two things about Mrs. Carson that brought her both affection and excellence from those who served

her: She had both justice and ability. Harassed as she was with the arrangement of a household in which abode the restlessness of its master's violent and eccentric impulses, Mrs. Carson never visited her distressed nerves and sensibilities on her servants.

With Claudia, there was something more. It began with the interest all artists have in working with exquisite material, for Claudia was an artist, in her own way. Mrs. Carson's girlish figure, with its gracious curves, her gray-blue eyes, her tapered fingers, her small feet, gave Claudia pleasure that gradually deepened to affection. It became a personal grievance to Claudia when she first debated the necessity of coloring cheeks whitening under the strain of marriage to a young man whose millions made his actions merely unusual, save in his own household, where they had all the tension of terror.

When, for the same reason, Claudia became expert in the removal of the traces of tears, and in effacing herself in the stormy scenes, that multiplied with the weeks, her grievance deepened. With each task that sought to replace the beauty that was being marred so recklessly, there also deepened hatred of the man who caused it. He became, in Claudia's eyes, an unendurable and destructive force.

Claudia, whose life lay in those places where intimate gossip of those they serve relieves the tedium of service, had heard enough about Colin Carson, even before she came to his house, to wonder how any young girl could marry him. But, of course, no girl could know these things told by frightened housekeepers and overpaid valets. Claudia had heard that this young girl lived, unparented, with relatives who had urged her to this marriage with praise of both the man and her own great good fortune.

After her first month with Mrs. Carson, Claudia neither endured nor indulged in any gossip about her. The tragedy of which she was a part became too much a concern of her own to talk about it. It was Claudia who followed

Mrs. Carson into the room where Colin Carson was torturing his pet collie, in order to prove that a dog that was fond of its master would show its affection even while being hurt. It was Claudia who telephoned, time and again, for lawyer and doctor when Mr. Carson's rages outstripped all control. It was Claudia who locked Mr. Carson in his room the night he endangered all their lives with the desire Nero had of seeing flames about him; and Claudia who sent for the police while the doctor was binding up Mrs. Carson's burned arm.

It was this police interference that finally brought Colin Carson into court, and thence to the sanitarium for the wealthy insane, where he had been for five years.

Claudia still recalled the quiet that fell like a soft blessing on the house after the terror of Colin Carson's presence had been removed. Gradually the house became a home. From the habitation of a merely rich man, it became the home of a woman who knew the meaning of color, and space, and beauty. The long room overlooking the park, that would have been a library, had any of the Carsons cared for books, grew into a marvelous place of shaded lights and glowing pictures. Golden and blue, crimson and ivory, books by the hundreds began to line its walls. Rare old editions companioned crisp, new books. Poetry, and war, and medicine beckoned from shelf and table. England, from its first written word to its last psychological novel, importuned one to stop and read. France flaunted its novels beside its science; Germany, its philosophy. And, looking down on the books, brooded other stories, caught in soft canvases by other artists.

The same influences began to soften every corner of the house. The mechanism of its daily needs became one of noiseless efficiency. Guests began to come and go. Here and there, men and women who were concerned in matters beyond the merely social came for the aid of the immense financial resources that now lay at Mrs. Carson's disposal.

Under these financial responsibilities, Mrs. Carson grew into a woman not easy to bewilder. Slowly but efficiently she investigated the great resources of the Carson estate. Presently she removed the trustee of the estate, who was enriching himself at its expense in illegitimate ways, and put in charge Mrs. Carleton Thorne's father, Judge Wallace. This brought her to friendship with Doctor Carleton Thorne and his brother, Wrexford Thorne, the rector, and with them many other interests came into her life.

To Claudia and those of her own household, she seemed to be growing in many different ways. There was no distress of any member of her household that did not receive her attention. Sometimes she took Claudia with her when Wrexford Thorne, who worked tirelessly among the poor of his parish, would telephone her of somebody needing especial help; somebody who, perhaps, would not let themselves be helped. Claudia had seen Mrs. Carson prevail where even Mr. Thorne, with his grave kindness, failed. She had heard him tell her that she was gifted in drawing from others their hidden pain.

In these days, Claudia herself found that she yielded readily to the same force. A faint vibration in Mrs. Carson's voice, the caressing quality of every move of her faintly slanted lids, delicate sensibilities that almost instantly perceived the situation before them; these things sped to the heart, and laid it bare. Almost without realizing it, Claudia would find herself telling of the disappointments of the life she led, its hardness, and its lack of opportunity. Sometimes she marveled at her own garrulity, but never with regret.

From her intimate vantage point, Claudia saw that she was not the only one whom Mrs. Carson moved to confidence. Wherever they went, there were always two things—personal service from every living thing that came near Mrs. Carson, and men—all kinds of men—telling the circumstances of their lives, watching for the banishment of unconcern in the blue eyes,

and its replacement by interest in their story.

Here and there had been a man to whom Mrs. Carson had been more accessible than to any of the others, but in these later months these passing friendships had given way to the absorbing interest Mrs. Carson seemed to take in the work planned for her by Wrexford Thorne. Claudia, watching the two at their tasks of kindness, sometimes thought of the semblance of a man in the sanitarium, and wondered.

She stood at the door now, and looked at the figure huddled in the big chair. There was despair in every lax line. In all the frightful days that had preceded her husband's removal to the sanitarium, Claudia had not seen Mrs. Carson look like this. A week before, Rawlins, the butler, had been told that he must attend to the front door himself, because Mr. Carson had escaped from his sanitarium. Claudia had found Mrs. Carson troubled, but only because of possible damage that her husband might do before they found him again. Then, in the occult way such news has of going about an expectant household, they had learned that Colin Carson had escaped from the sanitarium with the aid of a woman to whom he had once been attached. So far from troubling Mrs. Carson, this news in some manner seemed to give her hope of release.

Claudia had helped her dress, the afternoon before, for an interview with Judge Wallace, her trustee, and with Wrexford Thorne. She had thought, as she had fastened her into the most girlish of her gray-blue gowns, that she had never seen her look younger or more lovely. She had looked happy; she had been in such a hurry to be dressed, and her voice, as she told Rawlins that she would receive Mr. Thorne in the library, had had a new quality of sweetness Claudia did not remember to have heard before.

Judge Wallace had left the house after the briefest of interviews. Claudia was coming down the stairway a half hour later, as Wrexford Thorne came out of the library. She had stood still on the stairway, knowing instinctively

that he would not wish to be seen with that look on his face, that seemed to be holding back some unendurable distress. After what seemed to her a long while, Mrs. Carson had come upstairs to her dressing room, stood looking at Claudia blankly for a moment, and then dismissed her abruptly. Apparently the night had brought Mrs. Carson no relief, and the morning small counsel. She turned in her chair as she saw Claudia at the door.

"Claudia," she said, "I must go away some place. I think I must go some place where nobody will know of my money or my name; where every newspaper in the East will not ring with the fact of my departure and my possible plans; some simple little place where I cannot be found, because nobody would dream that I could exist in such a place. I think I must not even take a maid."

"I would so much rather go," said Claudia, "and you will miss a maid. I will try not to be in the way."

Mrs. Carson regarded her with brief inspection and consideration.

"There is no woman I know whose presence I could endure for a day, just now—but you are, of course, never in the way. Suppose I take you as a companion—not as a maid? Leave your black frocks and aprons at home, and take your real clothes. Have you enough?"

"Enough for a small place."

"What kind? Oh, of course, they would be all right—your taste is excellent."

"I have made over many of your own things that you have given me, Mrs. Carson. They were of the best houses in the world, to begin with. They are good now."

Mrs. Carson looked at the quiet, fine face and the trim figure, and nodded.

"And hats?" she said.

"Two. They also have been yours. They are good."

"Very well. You will pack one trunk for yourself and one for me. Use the simplest things I have, or those that look simplest. Take only two or three hats. I know of a little place in the Adirondacks, where there is a good ho-

tel, of its kind. It will be before the season, and only a few people. I have not been there since my marriage, but I think it will do. You are not to speak of our going to any one. I shall not use my own name. Perhaps I shall use yours. How old are you, Claudia?"

"Thirty-seven."

"I have a fancy, Claudia, for something absolutely different. I want to forget all this show and power of money. If you did not know, how old would you say I was, Claudia—really—not flatteringly?"

"Mrs. Carson, you are slim and small, and this increases youthfulness. If your hair were coiffed low, and if your figure were, perhaps, not so perfectly corseted—it might be eighteen. I have seen many girls older in the face at eighteen than you."

Mrs. Carson rose, and, for a moment, there was real interest in her face.

"Let us try," she said.

She hesitated a moment, and the interest gradually died away.

"You have heard," she said, "that there has been no news of Mr. Carson since he escaped from his sanitarium?"

"Yes, Mrs. Carson."

"That is another reason for my going away. I wish to be out of reach of a chance encounter with him."

"It seems impossible that he should not have betrayed himself to those hunting for him, in the condition he is."

"He is not alone. The woman who is with him is probably furnishing the brains of the episode. I do not know who is furnishing the money, but Judge Wallace thinks that it will soon give out, and then we shall hear from them. We should have heard sooner, if the news of his escape had been made public; but, under the circumstances, it is quite naturally a thing we wish to keep quiet."

"I will write to-day to our hotel, and make my arrangements. Be ready to go to-morrow. Let me think the matter over an hour, and then telephone for Doctor Carleton Thorne. I shall want his advice before I go, and I shall need to leave my address with him, and with Judge Wallace."

CHAPTER II.

The habits of the world are strong upon us. We may have just put aside the one thing that makes life worth living for us, and all else may seem dust and ashes, but we face those near us with no sign, and gather up the thread of such living as we may yet find.

It is the realization of this contrast between the ineffectual what-is with what-might-be, the little circle of our accomplishment with the measure of our unused abilities, that becomes the way to maturity. Youth has not learned the limitation of its possibilities; it has not compared the meager what-is with the great what-might-be. Youth has not found the formative power of fact. On the day it learns it, it has turned to grow old.

Nadine Carson, staring, white-faced, at the unlovely fact of her marriage that was no marriage, and across it at the love that had come so quietly into every moment of her life, a love for the one man in all her world to whom honor, and loyalty, and decency were more than love, had turned away from youth. Maturity is finer than youth, and age can be finest of all, because the taking of life as it is given us and working it out with self-denial, in spite of difficulty, and at the cost of pain, is finer than happiness, and the result is more sacred than success. Yet there is none of us to whom this turning place does not bring regret and rebellion, for youth is a wonderful thing of golden promises, and the price of the deeper things that make for character is high.

Clauda knocked at the door.

"Doctor Thorne, Mrs. Carson," she said.

"Ask him to come in here, Clauda."

The lawyer we take into our confidence when we find we cannot do without him; the clergyman we turn to in hours when the hope of a world to come must pay us for the tragedies of this world; but the doctor enters our house without announcement, in our moment of weakness, before we have had a chance to set to rights our concerns, either temporal or spiritual

The doctor is our real confessor, for the healing of our bodies carries with it chances of understanding no priest can have. Many of our illnesses come from the things that weigh too heavily on nerves and heart, from the despair that weakens our vitality, from the failure that leaves us a prey to foes without, from the strain that saps our strength, or the overstimulation that demands reactionary retrenchment. The skillful doctor becomes learned in these more subtle causes to which he must bring relief if he is to win success.

Carleton Thorne had small need to be told the meaning of Nadine Carson's white lassitude. He was Wrexford Thorne's brother, he had been closely associated with much of their work together, he had married Judge Wallace's daughter, Nadine's closest woman friend; and, on the few occasions when she had needed him, he had been Nadine's physician. But because he believed that a burden that is shared becomes one that can be borne; because he doubted Nadine's ability to look on the thing that had come upon her without distortion, Carleton Thorne deliberately sought her confidence. He waited first to hear why she had summoned him.

"Doctor Thorne," she said, "I am going away for a little while. I am going to a place where I shall not be known, and where my being there will not matter to anybody. You remember the habit of the Orient? When one wishes to hide oneself, or goes forth on some secret mission, one goes 'By the Gate of Allah.' You recall that no Arab will inquire further when he is made that answer. I am going by the gate of Allah for a little while. But the mission that I have in mind will presently need your help, and so before I go I want to tell you about it.

"In the heart of the Adirondacks there belongs to the Carson estate several hundred acres of very beautiful country, with a house too large for ordinary living purposes. I went there during the first weeks of my marriage. I have not been there since, and the place has been quite empty, save for its care-

takers. I am going to Saranac to look the place over, to see if it can be converted into a convalescent hospital for the great number of tuberculous patients—your—brother—and I have found who are not able to enter such institutions as exist, either charitably or otherwise, for this purpose, and yet need the help.

"I have long had this idea, but I could never bring myself to return to Carson to even look it over until now. I am going to-morrow, with Claudia, and after I have made my plans I shall send for you, to see if they are practicable. It is only a night's run to Saranac from here. Do you think you will be able to come?"

"I shall be very glad to have a hand in such a plan. Are you asking Wrexford to help you, also?"

She turned away.

"No," she said quietly.

"He will be disappointed. This has long been a thing he wanted to do."

"That is why I am doing it."

"Then—why——"

"He told me yesterday that the time had come for me to do these things for the sake of doing them, not because they were somebody else's ambitions."

Carleton Thorne smiled at her.

"How absurd!" he said. "These things are Rex's specialty. He has made such needs a lifelong study; you are interested in what he has learned, and you have the money to make his ideas practical; he has the experience that will make the use of your money practical. There could be no better combination. Why should either of you work alone, since you both have need of each other? Nothing could be more fortunate for both of you than the finding of somebody else who can so perfectly supply the other's needs."

Nadine lifted her head with a sudden direct look at the man who brought to the problem before her, that had seemed so full of tragedy, a breath of that rarest thing in the world—common sense.

"Yet even such good fortune," she said, "can have an end—if——"

Nadine rose suddenly, and began to

move to and fro. It was as if some long self-control had given way beneath the sudden expression of her own inmost hope by this outsider.

"Oh," she said finally, "it is no use! Your brother and I have met in too narrow a place. We cannot go on with this pretense of friendship—why should I not say so to you? And, failing friendship, what is there for us? What can we do? He is the rector of one of the most influential parishes in the country. He has an immense power for good. A thousand eyes follow all he does, a thousand lives are patterned after what he thinks. And it is his very life; it is his work. Neither I, nor any other woman, has a right to stand between a man and his work—not even—for—love."

"Do you not suppose I have searched for a way other than going out of his life? Have I not said there was no greater thing than this love? That on it we might build a new friendship? That between such as we anything was possible of self-restraint? But is it? This is a man to whom the slightest breath of scandal would mean an utter destruction of his power for good. And the world is overkeen in its search for such things, and swift to understand. There is no such thing as a secret. Love—love betrays itself in a hundred unforeseen ways; in suddenly softened voices, in a chance look—and the world would not credit our denial."

"If Wrexford Thorne were not a rector—it might be done—but a man so magnetic that women can never be done considering his every appearance, a social servant, a teacher—no! If, perhaps, it were some other woman than I. If I had lived with less disregard of opinion, if I were less conspicuous, if there had been fewer men in my life——"

She paused, visualizing these men, whose pursuit of her had had its interest and its fascination, for which she must now pay so high a price. What had any one of them been to her, that she should have now to consider them? Not even her friends—mere followers of this thing in her that, even in her

narrow girlhood, had brought Colin Carson to demand her in marriage; this allurements she barbed with her delicate appeal, her veiled and subtle intelligence, her voice seductive of their confidence. Until Wrexford Thorne had come into her life, she had not even known how great the value of a man's friendship might be to a woman. Learning it, she had supposed she might always keep it as it was. She had no wish to add the tragedy of love to the misery of her unfortunate marriage, no belief that she could love after its experience, no realization, until love came, that, because of this marriage, she was denied all the things that she had a right to as a woman.

Finding that Nadine had come to the end of her confidence, Carleton Thorne answered quietly, as if he spoke of the most casual of daily events:

"Wrexford and I, as you know, are more than brothers. We are close and congenial friends. He, in his way, is a bit of a doctor; I am a bit of a preacher. In a good many years among a good many women, I have never been even moderately concerned over Wrexford's relations with them, in spite of the fact that women seem to force their intimate concerns on him. He has, and I knew it, tremendous poise, and an ability to eliminate the personal that would check the most reckless of women. Even in such a hotbed of gossip as a parish presided over by a young and unmarried rector of ability and distinction, none of it seems to have touched Rex.

"But, from the very moment that you came into all our lives, I have known that you were there to stay. I have watched you both for a long time; first confidently, then anxiously, and finally with a feeling of fatality. You and Rex were too perfectly mated to escape—love; too swiftly intelligent not to recognize it when it came. That there could be no degradation of love to compromise between you I knew. But I knew also that Rex was one of those few to whom love of the one person meant what marriage means to the majority.

"Facts profaned by every foolish oath, and thoughtless promise, and broken tie can yet be true. There are still those for whom there is but one being in the world at whose hands they can accept love. To a man and woman, here and there, to give up such love is to give up all possibility of the best life has to offer that each of us craves. To give it up means to live forever after with the second best, not destitute of happiness, perhaps, but in a world made narrow and kept cold.

"I do not see why this should be imposed on either you or Rex. All of his training, all of his ideals, all his experience fits him for a friendship with you that, for all its foundation of love, need never overstep the most careful limitations of convention. His world will not suddenly turn and gossip about him because he finds that, with your help, he can accomplish good things he plans. And if they do, gossip that has no foundation of truth does not endure.

"There is not only pleasure for both of you in knowing each other, in being with each other, but you have a real need of what the other can give. Will you give this up for the lack of a little faith in your own self-control? Have you both not been trained to control and to endurance? Why should you suppose it is suddenly going to fail you? As for those who look on—what is it to them, or to you, provided you keep this love an honorable thing?

"The world has come to a pretty pass if friendship cannot exist between a man and a woman without a hue and a cry, if the world cannot believe in a man's probity and a woman's decency merely because they happen to love each other. I do not believe Wrexford means to impose such a weak sacrifice on you. If he does, he is making a mistake, and he will be the first one to find it out.

"If your husband loved you, if you were living with him, and held the responsibility of his happiness or his success in your hands, this course that absolutely separates you would be the only one to take. The fact that he is your husband will prevent you from

marriage. It will hold you from all expression of love; but that is all you owe your husband, and you do not even owe him this; you owe it to yourself and the man you love. Sacrifice goes too far if it demands any more of you."

Nadine looked at the doctor with eyes in which hope began to dawn, faintly at first, then waxing into radiance.

"There are some sacrifices," said the doctor, "that are nothing else than self-mutilation. I think we are not given deep instincts by One who wishes to make their prophecy a lie. Between that which we need for our completion and its attainment there is no great gulf fixed. Only the endurance that can face the 'fatigue of a long and distant purpose,' only the effort needful for the holding fast to a great hope, only the necessity to keep the hope ideal lie between aspiration and achievement. You say if Rex were other than he is, if he were not a rector, there might be hope. Because he is what he is, because his life is set to the service of the ideal, because endurance for the right's sake is his birthright, there is hope for you both, and it should be a hope that means enrichment of life, not poverty of life."

Nadine had been standing still, listening, as if she could not hear too much, her whole body awakening to this new call of the mind and heart. This would indeed be worth living for and striving for, this would make for her a new heaven and a new earth. She leaned toward the doctor.

"Can you make Wrexford see this—as you—do?"

"Did you not know this was what he meant when he came to you yesterday?"

Nadine shook her head.

"Yesterday—I had but one thought, I had but one hope. This woman who helped Colin Carson to escape claimed marriage with him—a marriage that preceded my own. I had hoped for release. It was this hope, told to your brother as a certainty, that betrayed him to an acknowledgment of his love. It—oh, it is so wonderful to be loved

by one you love—that it is no wonder we find it hard to believe, no wonder it has to be said to us over and over. Perhaps without this larger hope of release from my marriage I might never have really known that I was loved. And then yesterday I found that I was not to be released, that the woman's claim was only an effort at blackmail. After the vision of release, it seemed to me there was nothing left to me—but to give up. And Wrexford—spoke only of—of what I might still find——" Her voice trailed into silence.

Carleton Thorne's voice lightened into a tone of the most casual comment.

"These days in which you have no news of Mr. Carson must naturally be unsettled ones. And there is nothing you can do about it save to wait. I think you have chosen very wisely in selecting this time to consider your Adirondack plan. It is delightful there in June, too. The whole thing will do you good. I hope you will spend half of each day in the saddle, getting back your color and storing up strength. Then, when you are ready for us, Rex and I will come up, with Amy and Judge Wallace, too, if they can get off, and we will talk about a suitable staff for your hospital, about nurses, and physicians, and expenses. Rex will be jubilant. He has a dozen such cases right now with which he is bothering me to death, because he can find no place for them, and they are not available for any of the charitable institutions we already have."

He rose, and held out his hand, looking on a different woman from the one he had faced at his coming.

"I shall hope to hear that you are ready for us in—say, about a week—and I shall go from here to tell Wrexford about it, and encourage him about the fate of his patients, who need what you are going to prepare."

Nadine put her hand in his. A faint color lent promise to her cheeks.

As the door closed behind him, she moved to the window to watch him as he went. This was what it meant to help others, to see things squarely

and in proportion. All over the world women were living crippled lives, denied as she had been and was, but unrecompensed as was she. She was young, and free, and incredibly rich. Truly she had no right to spend her hours moaning over their emptiness. Before her moved the long procession of burdened women, women pretending love in weariness and disgust, women bent over long seams, brain seared with endless stitches; women unfit to earn their bread, thrusting shame aside for yet a little life; women too fragile to fight forced to the grim battle of the strong; women, thousands of them, bearing in their hearts the hurt of the unloved. All her life was too short to reach these needs, now that it might keep at its heart the love that made it life.

CHAPTER III.

Saranac Lake glittered and danced in greeting to a sun that, coming out late from behind an encompassing fog, stripped the mountains of their gray, and blue, and pearl veils, and flung over all the little, pine-decked islands ropes of diamonds, and even a misty rainbow here and there.

On the porch of the Algonquin Hotel, that lay in a little hollow of wild woodland, where just enough trees had been cut to permit a view of all this glittering, dancing water, a few early guests walked to and fro, waiting the arrival of the tallyho with the mail and, perhaps, a guest or two. In the sunniest corner of the piazza sat Hutchinson, of the Adirondack division of the New York Central. He came every June to Saranac, first on business, second because it was a habit, and third because he was an Adirondack cure, and he felt it his duty to spend his vacations there, though it had been fifteen years since he had first brought his cough and a heart very sore over the breaking of his engagement, as a result of his ailment, to these mountains for cure. Both heart and lungs had responded, though Hutchinson had never gained the courage to become engaged to a woman again.

Sometimes he said it was because tuberculous people ought not to marry, and sometimes he said that he had too long been cured to really believe that, but that he was getting too old for sentiment; and sometimes, as on this morning, when he looked out over the jewel-decked islands and took in the stinging tonic air, he had still a faint hope that he might yet find the woman who would be glad to spend the next twenty years with him, even if his ancient foe should find him again. She must be a woman of the right age. He was forty-eight, and there were many things he could not tolerate—silly laughter and chatter just for sound's sake, and the amazing assertiveness of the American girl were among them.

Hutchinson believed that the quiet and graceful woman who did not demand the center of the stage, and who only spoke when she had something to say, the woman who could think for herself, and refrain from announcing her thoughts from the housetops was growing rarer each day. If she was self-possessed and able, she was assertive and declamative. If she was modest and retiring, she could not manage her own bank balance, or plan her own affairs. Hutchinson hoped before he was fifty to meet a woman who, if she were suddenly to find her husband invalided, could yet manage to keep accounts straight and check baggage naturally, as a man would, and not blatantly, as if it were a phenomenon.

Heavens, how he hated women who talked! He brought his gaze back from the islands to the tallyho drawing up to the porch. Two women and a young man descended. The man was the kind who would always, probably, be called young, unless he lost some of his glossy black hair, or covered his short upper lip and prominent chin with a beard. He was neither tall nor overbroad, but the symmetry and strength of his medium build were beautiful to see as he sprang down from the tallyho and stood aside with a fine unconsciousness of the girl descending.

Hutchinson chuckled. The chap was probably aware of every move the girl

made. He looked the kind of a man that would be, and, for all his unconsciousness, he would probably try to get introduced to her at once. Hutchinson did not like girls, so he passed over this one to look at the other woman, who might perhaps be thirty-three, or four, or five. A grave, fine face, with observant eyes! Hutchinson marked the competent manner in which she feed the driver and attended to their two trunks. Through the window he saw her register, followed by the young man, who, after he had inscribed his own name, evidently read the woman's.

Hutchinson smiled, knowing very well that every other guest would do the same thing as soon as he or she conveniently could. It was convenient for him very soon. Miss Claudia Murray, he read. The young girl was not registered. She did not look like a maid. The young man was inscribed somewhat ornately—Maurice Langdon—and New York was appended to each name.

"What's the matter with the girl?" asked Hutchinson of the clerk, who was often his only companion in the early June days of his annual vacation. "Has she no name?"

"Perhaps she can't write," said the clerk. "She hasn't done so, anyhow. It was arranged for before she came."

"She looked young to be ashamed of her name."

"Maybe she's seen it too much at the top of a program, or something like that. You can't just tell if you give her a good look, about how young she is. No, there are no wrinkles; her face is young, but there's a kind of discontented look in her eyes—well, I couldn't just tell you."

Presently the clerk was required to offer an explanation to young Magee, the doctor at the sanitarium, and to Mrs. Schultz, who always liked to know, and to the trained nurse, who took care of the woman who had a cough. No, the woman with the cough was not tuberculous. The hotel did not receive such patients. Several of the young girls came to him with questions, and finally the clerk got tired, and amused

himself with weaving a new theory for each inquirer, so that by noon there were a buzz of gossip and a mass of conjecture that brightened every eye as Alphonse guided the two women to their luncheon.

Hutchinson observed that it was the table in the square bay window overlooking the woods that was given them, and, by the exact shading of Alphonse's manner, he concluded it had been a good fee. At his own table, a little murmur of critical comment on the two women stopped as young Langdon was given a seat next to Hutchinson.

The men nodded at each other.

"Is this your first visit, Mr. Langdon?"

"Yes; I have never been here before."

"Did you come for a vacation?"

"No. I have been sent by the Department of Agriculture to isolate the weevil that is destroying the pines on the Carson estate."

"Have they opened up the place?" said Hutchinson.

"I think not," said Langdon, "though I have not been over there. Some time ago the caretaker notified Mrs. Carson that the pines were dying, and she asked for somebody to examine them. They tell me that the place has been shut up for years—that Mrs. Carson does not like woods. They say she likes cities."

"She has certainly been conspicuous in a good many of them," said Hutchinson.

In answer to a few questions, Hutchinson further imparted that it was rather quiet there, but that the horses were good, and for the young people there was a dance once a week. Then he laughed at Langdon's involuntary glance at the girl in the bay window.

"Sure, she dances," he said.

"I wonder?" said the young man. "I came up on the train with them, and I cannot make them out—their relation to each other, I mean. The girl just sat back and let the older woman carry all the grips and run the whole thing. And the older woman scarcely says a word, and, when she does, in the quietest kind of way."

Hutchinson looked at the woman. "That suits me," he approved. "She looks capable. Some business woman off for a vacation with a younger relative who has money she don't have to work for," said Hutchinson.

CHAPTER IV.

"Mrs. Carson, the men are never done asking about you," said Claudia, a few days later. "The women answer that you are to be suspected for many reasons."

"Chiefly because the men ask, isn't it?" asked Mrs. Carson. "It is always so. The women—save the one with the cough and her handsome nurse—I have scarcely seen. What are they like?"

"There are some fat, spiteful ones, and some thin, suspicious ones, and many who sit, and sew, and listen. There is a Mrs. Schultz, who, I think, cannot live longer if she does not soon learn your name. There is a maiden lady, with a constant cold in her head, who has talked much with me."

"Claudia, it would appear to me that the tall man, with the grim mouth and the gray hair, has shared the maiden lady's preference for speech with you."

"Mr. Hutchinson? He is almost the only one here who has asked me no questions at all."

Nadine looked at Claudia's trim figure in its simple white linen, at her glossy brown hair and well-shaped hands, and found that she compared very well with the women about her. A little farther down the veranda, Mrs. Schultz sat in a rocking-chair that appeared to fit her tightly, looking complacently at her daughter, whose rounded outlines already suggested a possible following of her mother's physique in later life. Her daughter was chatting with Langdon and young Magee. Occasionally the mother spoke to the elderly maiden lady, who sat near her, head bent over her embroidery.

"There's that girl," said Mrs. Schultz, increasing the number of her chins to look at Nadine over her glasses.

"I told Josephine that she could not

talk to her. I found them together last night on the porch. I simply will not have it. Josephine says that all the plainness of her clothes does not mean poorness. She says her stockings are the handsomest silk she has ever seen, and her petticoats are trimmed with real lace. She says it would take the best of dressmakers to cut dresses that way, even if they are plain, and that the laundress says she never saw such underwear in her life—that their laundry bill was nearly fifteen dollars last week."

"Well," said the other woman, "there's something queer about her. All her mail goes to the office, and even the clerk has shut up about her."

Others on the porch gave the girlish, gray-blue figure their attention. Mr. Langdon's conversation, as he looked at Nadine, suddenly lapsed. Miss Schultz followed his glance with a scornful flicker of her eyes.

"She is going to ride this afternoon," she said. "The clerk has been busy all morning getting a horse good enough for her. She is going over the Carson estate."

"She can't get in without a permit," said Langdon, a little eagerly. "I wonder if she knows it?"

"Why don't you ask her?"

Miss Schultz's expression conveyed the folly of such interest.

"I think I will," said Langdon promptly. "Excuse me."

He moved to the piazza steps near which Nadine sat with Claudia. Mrs. Schultz took a more resentful notice of this desertion than did her daughter. She saw the young man smiling at Nadine, and she watched curiously the looks cast upon her by every woman on the veranda. Claudia had risen and moved down the steps, where she was joined by Mr. Hutchinson.

Though Langdon had chatted with Claudia and Nadine after the informal habit of a mountain hotel before the season, he was as yet guiltless of all knowledge of her name. Claudia had seemed abnormally clever in avoiding any calling of her companion by name. So Langdon had to open his speech

with Nadine without salutation, possessed as he was of the American shyness over demanding names.

"I have discovered, in the way such things are known in a hotel, that you are riding to Carson to-day."

"Yes, I am, Mr. Langdon."

He was very young, and ruddy, and strong. Nadine looked at him thoughtfully.

"Do you know, *excellenza*, that you cannot get into Carson without a permit?"

"Are you quite sure?" said Nadine.

"Quite sure. You know, I ride there every day."

"I know," she answered. "You dig up the pine trees with your finger nails, do you not? What ones are you working on now?"

"The group of pines isolated on a little island in the lake. I am experimenting with them, but I am digging them up with my teeth. This variety resists finger nails."

Nadine smiled again, and even Claudia, who had paused discreetly out of earshot, looked on with interest.

"It is the first time," said Hutchinson, "I have seen her laugh since she came. You won't even talk a little bit about her, will you?" he concluded, observing that Claudia made no answer.

"Oh, I never talk," said the woman softly. "But I will listen to you with pleasure."

To such perfection, Hutchinson gave silent praise. Then he said: "Well, I think the little duchess has been, upon a time, both sad and bored. Perhaps she has been publicly persecuted, so that she prefers an incognita; but she looks, for all her youth, as if she had lived much, and needed rest; and, for all her boredom, as if she had rested some, and needed youth."

Claudia made him no answer. In the meantime, Mrs. Carson had taken an envelope and pencil from Langdon, and, spreading it on her knee, she had begun to draw on the envelope. Langdon bent over her. The women on the veranda watched. Miss Schultz took counsel with her mother.

"Well," said that lady, "it is because

she has nerve, and she don't ask anything of him, not even to pull up a chair. I guess you can have a horse if you want one."

Apparently quite unconscious of her critical surveillance, Nadine described little, crooked marks on the paper, while young Langdon looked at her hair, and her delicate, provocative profile, and her small, ringless hands, that, for all their tapering quality, yet suggested capability—the kind of hand to manage a horse by touch, not strength.

"You see," said Nadine, suddenly sending him an oblique glance from under a cloud of wind-tossed hair, "you cut off five miles going to the lake by this path."

"How does it happen that you know the bridle paths of Carson so well?" said Langdon.

"For the same reason that you know its trees well," said Nadine. "I was employed there once."

Langdon let this sink in with a slight feeling of dismay. One cannot have at command for years the power of unlimited money without acquiring a certain subtle atmosphere of achievement. Close about Nadine hung the manner of one used to command; it expressed itself in a hundred little ways that young Langdon could not reconcile with "employment."

Nadine saw him pull himself together, and her swift perceptions caught at once the slight, very slight, change in his manner as he asked if he might ride with her that afternoon. She rose as she consented, dismissing him with a regal little nod that caused him new wonder.

He was young enough to lay his perplexity before Hutchinson at luncheon, but that gentleman only laughed at him.

"She employed there!" he scoffed.

"She was only rubbing in on you the fact that you were, and that that was the only reason you had for knowing the place well. You were probably patronizing with your permits and your information. Perhaps she has been there as a guest. In Carson's time there were some rather brilliant house parties there."

"What's become of Carson?"

"He went mad. There's a crazy strain in the family. I was here when he brought his wife to Carson for her honeymoon. It read well. Mr. Colin Carson took his beautiful young wife to his Adirondack place for the honeymoon. Imagine being deposited alone in that tremendous place, honeymooning with a thing like Carson. I do not wonder that she would never go back, and that it has been closed ever since."

"Nevertheless, it is from Mrs. Carson," said Langdon, "that I have my commission to discover what ails the pines. It is from her that I receive checks for my services."

"It would be a pity to see them die. Still, it is a wonder that Mrs. Carson has time to plan for dying pines."

"Why?"

"I suppose she is one of the most-sought-after women of her city."

Hutchinson recalled the rumors about her, trying to fit them in with her interest in dying pines. He had spent the morning in the freight office of the railroad he helped to officer, and there he had seen the billing of two automobiles—a little runabout and a larger touring car—to be sent to Miss Claudia Murray, at the Algonquin Hotel, freight paid by check drawn by Nadine Carson. Hutchinson had been wondering ever since if it were possible that Miss Claudia Murray's companion could be Mrs. Carson.

He had even pondered, in the face of Langdon's evidently absorbed interest in Miss Claudia's companion, over the advisability of a suggestion or two. He was a nice young chap, and, though he talked too much, Hutchinson saw no reason for his being fooled; and then Hutchinson took a look at the woman lunching over in the bay window, and wondered if the man lived who, at Langdon's age, would mind being fooled by her. Then, too, there was the patronizing tone of voice when Langdon spoke of her having been employed. It would not hurt him, once in a way, to find himself egregiously mistaken.

Still considering Mrs. Carson, Hutchinson spoke again:

"I recall there was that story of that Russian grand duke who wanted to marry her. It made a big fuss. And the crown prince who wanted her without marriage, and young Brooks-Chadwick, and that chap in South Africa."

"Money works queer spells," sighed Langdon.

"Not that queer," said Hutchinson. "That's woman, not money."

"I suppose she is interesting and good-looking, both."

"Oh, you are young!" This time it was Hutchinson that sighed. "If she is that interesting, what difference do her looks make? You probably want them pink and white, and naïve. You do not know distinction when you see it. I have no doubt you prefer unsophistication that says 'Oh, Mr. Langdon!' to experience that causes you to do the exclaiming yourself. No Mrs. Carson for you."

The young man bridled.

"I am going riding with the young lady this afternoon. If she has been employed at Carson, she will probably know all about Mrs. Carson. I'll see what I can find out about her."

Hutchinson laughed.

"I'll lay you a box of cigars you don't find out a thing more than you know now."

"I'll take you," said Langdon.

CHAPTER V.

To Nadine, her return to Carson after six years was fraught with memories whose bitterness she did not wish to measure. She could not bring herself just yet to face the great, gray house on the hill, where, six years before, she had come as a young bride. She meant to look about the grounds, to ride over their miles of bridle paths, and perhaps drive her motor about the roads, before she went to the house. She wished to make her first investigations before she notified the caretaker of her arrival, and that was the reason that she did not go in the lodge gate, but cut across the country to a bridle path that she knew of, that skirted the lake among moss-covered rocks and ferns that brushed

the knees of her horse. Neither was Nadine averse to being accompanied by a stranger, who could know nothing of the thoughts that every recognized landmark of the place brought back to her.

The simplest of us are many-sided, and to see but one phase of the men and women we meet is a weariness to the spirit. Nadine knew what it was to pick out in a man's mind what differentiated him from other men, but in Langdon there seemed to her a little more than his youth on which to concentrate.

As the horses swung round the curve of the lake, she moved the conversational pawn from the hotel and its guests to books; but Langdon did not read. Yes, he liked O. Henry's stories, but he could by no means assert that O. Henry had caught his opening of a story, with its little paragraph in the shape of a text, from Kipling. He did not know Kipling.

Nadine met this youthfulness with an ingenuousness that would have betrayed her to an older man. But Langdon liked it. He found himself moving easily from the things he did not know to the things he did. He knew every café in New York—East Side, Fifth Avenue, Harlem, and Broadway. He knew the plays of the present time, and even as far back as last year. As Nadine let her eyes rest on him, he found an almost boyish impulse sweep through him to display all the small points of his knowledge. He had to hold himself from boasting. Nadine allowed herself to be instructed. Presently she led him to his profession. There were grave men who would have doubted their ears to have heard Nadine's: "And what is entomology?"

Langdon essayed to be witty.

"It means different things at different times," he said. "Last year it meant peach trees; this year it means pine trees."

"That is a definition of forestry. Where do the weevils and other tree destroyers come in?"

"They come in bottles when I get through with them, and sometimes I stick them on pins."

Nadine let her thoughts stray onto her own problems, while Langdon made his opinions of entomology as a profession into a glib discourse. The horses threaded a moss-covered path through a cathedral of pines.

It suddenly occurred to Langdon that he was missing his opportunity of winning his wager with Hutchinson.

"This Mrs. Carson," said Langdon, "for whom I am investigating the condition of the pines, seems to know more about such things than most women do."

"How do you know?" said Nadine.

"She has written to me several times about the trees at Carson. They are good letters."

"Perhaps her secretary writes them. These fabulously rich women seldom write their own letters."

Langdon gave her a disconcerted look.

"You must know her. You said you had been employed at Carson."

"I know her—a little." Nadine gave no information as to the nature of her employment.

"Is she pretty?" the man asked.

"She is clothed by the best artists in the world. She is dressed by the most expert maid. She is watched over and waited on by people who spend their lives increasing her effectiveness. These things are more durable than beauty."

Langdon stared.

"Hutchinson says 'men are foolish about her.' There must be some reason besides her clothes and the way she gets herself up."

"Yet it made little difference what Du Barry wore," said Nadine lightly. "You recall how she kept to violets. And the silk Pompadour loved still bears her name."

Langdon grew restless.

"You speak of this woman as if she were a well-dressed doll. She is an entomologist."

"What use is it for a woman to have brains if she does not know how to do her hair?"

Langdon discovered that he had been turned from his subject. He came back to it abruptly.

"How do you suppose a woman of brains could have married Colin Carson?"

Nadine's eyes became somber.

"She was not a woman. She was only an unformed girl, unwise with that terrible ignorance of men and of life that only a very young girl can have. What does a girl know of what marriage may mean to a woman?"

Nadine paused, her voice vibrating with hidden pain. She seemed to have forgotten her auditor. Langdon could make no answer, held silent by sheer astonishment. These were scarcely the words of the young girl he supposed her to be. Her face, as she had spoken them, had a look of one who had lived.

The horses paused beside the small, barb-wired gate hidden among the bushes. Langdon sprang off his horse, and held the gate open for her. She passed through with no look at him. A little shudder shook her. As her horse moved several lengths ahead of Langdon's, she fell again into thought. If she had waited! At some time Wrexford Thorne must have come into her life, and she could have gone to him as a girl, untouched by all these memories. She brooded over her girlhood. There had been nothing in it to train her to companionship with a man who lived Wrexford Thorne's life, touching other lives closely, both in their hour of triumph and their day of need. He moved among all kinds of men and women, rich and poor, powerful and outcast, unwelcome and beloved. She would have been no mate for such a man in those days of restless dependence on relatives reluctant to have her earn her own living, yet begrudging her their gifts.

Down in the bottom of her own heart, for all her plaint, Nadine knew that even her mistaken marriage had trained her to qualities the wife of a powerful man would need; to resourcefulness, to poise, to insight. The responsibilities that had fallen on her with the mere management of this great estate had cleared and developed her mind. The path she had had to take

as a woman holding the power of great wealth, unhusbanded and yet married, could not help but deepen both character and sense of values. She had grown as a man grows, fighting the world; as women do not grow, shielded and protected. She knew she was better fitted by what she had gone through to be the wife of the man she loved; better fitted to be a mother, whose task was to train sons and daughters to fight the good fight.

The path began to defile through a rocky cleft. Some subtle complexity of atmosphere about Nadine kept Langdon from intruding on her silence, and set him to considering her more thoughtfully. What position could she have occupied in this strange Carson household? Astounding possibilities occurred to him, and were checked by his necessity to watch his horse. They were descending a rough path carpeted with slippery pine needles through a miniature cañon cut out of rocks covered with dense foliage. The pines seemed to grow out of the sides of the cliff almost as if they could thrive on bare limestone.

"They make their own soil with their falling needles, do they not?" said Nadine. "This place used to be called 'Thousand Pines' until Colin Carson bought it. I wonder if this weevil that is killing the pines is the same one they found at Tryon last year?"

Langdon stared at her.

"Why, how do you know?" he said. "A minute ago you were asking me what entomology was."

"I?" She considered. "Was that a reason for my not knowing what it was—the asking you?"

A dull flush spread across Langdon's face. Silence fell between them again. The young man followed her with bewilderment. Nadine's thoughts returned to Colin Carson, who had first ridden these paths with her. As they emerged from the rocky cleft, her horse suddenly shied. Nadine lifted her curb, looking about her for a reason for the horse's unrest, and finding none. Langdon watched her. She had brought her horse to a stop, and was considering two

paths that branched off from the foot of the cleft. One led back to the lake. The other led to the house. With the vision of the house that the path recalled to her, there returned the memory of Colin Carson as he was in those days—the eyes shifting, even then, from intentness to vacancy. The upper lip ever ready to draw back from the prominent teeth. It became a snarl in later days.

She looked up at the cliff beside her. Farther back there used to be a small summerhouse set on a sudden rise of rock that gave a view of all the surrounding country. As she looked up at the cliff, Langdon saw her stiffen and grow still. Every tint of the wild-rose color that the ride had brought to her face fled. With eyes wide and startled, she stared at the dense mass of foliage overhanging the cliff.

Langdon came to her side. Almost involuntarily his hand closed on the small pistol he carried about during the lonely rides his work necessitated.

"What is it?" he asked.

She made no answer for a moment. Then: "It is gone," she said. "Did you see it?"

"See what?"

"Eyes staring down on us. A man's face, with lips drawn back, snarling!"

"I see nothing."

Nadine bent over her saddle, shivering.

"I am obsessed," she said, "obsessed with the vision of Colin Carson. Let us go back."

"But Mr. Carson has—he is not in his right mind. He is in an asylum."

"He seemed to be staring down at me from that cliff," she said, forcing herself to look up once more at the screen of foliage that hid the top of the cliff. "His eyes had the same malevolent, threatening look they had when"—she paused suddenly, looking at Langdon—"when he threatened to kill his wife for keeping him in a sanitarium, if he ever got out."

"He isn't out," said Langdon.

"Yes, he is," said Nadine. "They do not know where he is. They have not known for ten days."

A crunching of boughs fell on the silence of the woods. Nadine's horse quivered.

"Do you hear?" she said.

"A decayed branch of one of the dead pines has fallen," said Langdon. "Do you want me to look?"

"No; let us go back," said Nadine.

They went back over their way in silence. As the barbed gate closed behind them, Nadine spoke again to Langdon:

"Have you seen anybody about the place in your work?"

"Nobody but the lodge keeper and a man or two working about the place."

"You have not been near the house?"

"No. It is too far off from where I am working for me to go. And I do not know my way about these winding roads yet. Yesterday I saw a woman on one of the paths near the lodge. I spoke to the lodge keeper about it, and he said it was one of the women they had engaged to go over the house. They open up the house ever so often. It is too bad to let a place like this go to waste."

"Even if it is haunted," said Nadine.

"Something has frightened you," said Langdon.

"I have frightened myself."

No color had returned to Nadine's face, even after the sharp canter with which they ended their ride at the hotel veranda. Claudia met her with alarm. Upstairs in her room Nadine fell to shivering.

"You are ill, Mrs. Carson?" said Claudia. "Let me send for Doctor Thorne. It takes but a night's travel for him to come."

"I have been seeing visions, Claudia," said Nadine. "I shall never have the courage to put this thing through."

Claudia watched her silently.

"Yet this morning," continued Nadine, "in the village I passed a man who had stopped to cough, holding onto the porch of the house I came out of. He was plainly a gentleman, but he looked sick, and hungry, and far too thinly clad, and he could hardly hold himself erect while he coughed and coughed. His coat was buttoned up to his chin

because there was no collar beneath it. Yet he was not a man to whom one could offer money. This is but one of hundreds of such pitiful cases. The doctors here tell me that these people come with barely enough money to bring them, hoping to get work to enable them to live in this climate, and there is no work for them. They—they starve—and I have thousands of idle dollars, and this great place going to waste!"

She brooded for a few moments on the problem before her.

"Some of these people could be cured with even a little help—help I could easily give them. And I am frightened into a panic by my own fancies. It is high time that I made myself face these ghosts. To-morrow I will go over the house from top to bottom."

"But you will need Doctor Thorne eventually. May I not send for him, even if it is earlier than you first planned to have him here? You look badly, Mrs. Carson. The place will not be ready any sooner if you should get ill."

"I will write to him," said Nadine. "He is very busy; perhaps he cannot come."

"Let me wire him, Mrs. Carson, asking when it will be convenient for him to come."

"Do that, then," said Nadine.

Clauda hesitated a moment.

"You have something else you wish to ask me?" said Nadine. Then she turned suddenly. "Clauda—Clauda, you are blushing! What have you been doing all afternoon?"

"I—I have been talking with Mr. Hutchinson."

Mrs. Carson bent toward her, smiling.

"Clauda, I have never seen two people past thirty-five so entirely silent, yet so persistently bent on talking together. Do you realize that at a place like this a man and a woman can see more of each other in a few days than they could in a year's time in town?"

"Mrs. Carson," said Clauda, and her voice had about it a certain gravity that held Nadine's attention. "I could never have even made the acquaintance

of such a man in town; nor could the acquaintance have grown as it has, had I come here under any other conditions than those you arranged.

"All my life I have been so situated that I have never been able to meet men in plain, friendly fashion. Among the men in service, as I am, there has been no man that I wanted especially to know. The others, those to whom a woman in my position is fair game, have been worse. And my own people are all gone.

"I—I have greatly enjoyed—this acquaintance. It has just begun, of course, but I think, if you do not mind, I would rather it did not go farther on any false foundation. May I tell Mr. Hutchinson the place I occupy in—in your household?"

"Assuredly, Clauda. Tell him also that you are invaluable to me, that you have always been loyalty itself to me. Shall I tell him, Clauda?"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Carson. I merely wanted your permission to tell your name."

"He looks shrewd, Clauda. You may find he needs very little telling."

The girl turned away.

"I must find if—if it makes a difference," she said.

CHAPTER VI.

At dinner that night, Hutchinson chaffed Langdon over the meagerness of the information he had elicited about Mrs. Carson during his long ride.

"I found out she was not pretty," said Langdon, "but just well dressed."

"Oh, you did!" Hutchinson chuckled. "What do you call pretty?"

"Oh, come!" said Langdon.

He bowed to Mrs. Schultz as that lady took her place at a table farther down the room.

"They are having a party to-night," continued Langdon, "a german. Mrs. Schultz and some of the other women are giving it, but they are not going to ask the young lady I rode with to-day. They say she is some kind of maid or companion of Miss Murray's, who is being permitted to eat in the dining room to keep Miss Murray com-

pany. They have asked Miss Murray, but not the other one."

"It isn't often a companion has a horse to ride, or leisure to ride it all afternoon, is it?" said Hutchinson.

"Well, you know, she said she had been employed at Carson. These other women say——"

"Well, excuse me!" said Hutchinson. "I can get along all right, the short time I stay in a hotel, if I do not have to hear what the veranda gossips say."

"You can't tell," said Langdon, "but what there may be truth in what they say."

"A hundred thousand Albigenses said the same thing about St. Paul, and doubtless reflected bitterly on it as they were being burned alive."

This was quite beyond Langdon, and the conversation lapsed for a few minutes. He dispatched his salad, and then spoke again:

"Do you suppose she will be hurt at not being invited to a party where everybody else is going?"

"Who?" said Hutchinson shortly. "The mysterious one, or Miss Murray?"

"Oh, Miss Murray is asked—the other one."

Hutchinson laughed out loud. Those dining near him looked up.

"Langdon," said Hutchinson, "for the love of Heaven, throw away your crutches! I am not possessed with snobbish sentiments, but those who have allowed their legs to petrify are impossible to walk with, however well they can sew, or knit, or pick cherries."

"What on earth do you mean by that?" said Langdon.

"It is not my business to educate a Harvard entomologist. But, just as you sit here now, look at those two women over there in the bay window. Miss Murray is acting her part pretty well. That is because she is naturally quiet and competent. But you could see, if you would, that she always drops behind to allow the other woman to go first into the dining room; that she waits for her to order, that she never intrudes suggestion or opinion, that she draws

up the chairs, and gets the mail from the private office.

"Now, I don't know much about women's clothes, and you, being a younger bachelor than I, ought to know less; but look at that gown. It is one of that simple kind you read about, that it takes somebody like Worth to make. There's a yoke, or vest, or whatever it is, of lace, and some other lace on it. The man who shares my apartment in town with me is in the lace business, and I know lace. That stuff makes the dress cost several hundred dollars, and it isn't the girl's best dress; probably just an ordinary one. It seems like a little thing, but if an ordinary dress has lace like that on it, you can bet she's not companioning any woman for a living."

Langdon considered.

"Well, you know there are queer stories about Colin Carson and women. When she seemed to know the paths about Carson so well this afternoon, I wondered——"

Hutchinson's laugh interrupted Langdon again.

"You've the makings of a scientist, for sure," he said. "Thirty years old, aren't you? Thirty, and don't know that kind of woman when you see her! You've looked this girl pretty squarely in the face a number of times. You may or may not have seen stories there—but not that particular one. And, let me tell you, that story always leaves its mark for the next man to read—always."

Langdon looked at Hutchinson in silence. Then he hazarded:

"You've jolly well studied the thing out. What's your game?"

"Mere idleness. I'm loafing up here while you are working. Dissimilarity always creates mystery. Men and women of the same ambitions understand each other. None of these people here would understand either of these women."

"Well," said Langdon, "I will ask her her name, point-blank, after dinner."

"I hope I am there to hear her answer," said Hutchinson. "It is not the

way, on the whole, that I would suggest for you to throw away your crutches. Ask yourself her name, and see if you cannot stand unaided."

"How do you know so much?" said Langdon, thoroughly nettled.

"I don't," said Hutchinson. "But I have this advantage over you: The accident of ill health at twenty-five, that it took me five years to cure, kept me pretty quiet, with little else to do than to watch what was going on around me. I know it is a habit with many people to think that there is little practical value in mere speculation. It may be, but there is this difficulty in leaving ourselves to act without preparatory thought—it makes us competent to handle only the things that have occurred to us before, or been experienced by those we know. There isn't a day, really, when we may not come upon entirely new conditions, and then for the lack of the habit of weighing motives and considering values, we cannot meet the situation; or, worse still, we are guilty of hideous injustice.

"Look at these women here. This coming of another woman among them, who reserves her identity and does not intrude her personal matters, is new. They are, as a result, making themselves as ridiculous as you are, from sheer inability to speculate."

Hutchinson nodded, and left the table as Mrs. Carson and Claudia passed him. He walked with them out of the dining room to the porch.

"Will you excuse me a moment?" said Claudia. Then, to Mrs. Carson: "I will send the telegram to the doctor."

She went back into the office.

"You are not looking well, madam," said Hutchinson, with a stately courtesy that seemed to fit his tall figure quite perfectly. "Was the saddle riding perhaps a little too vigorous?"

"I did come home tired," Nadine assented. "I am not yet quite used to this altitude. It takes me about a week to really enjoy it."

"Would it not be better, then, to wait that week? But, then, your automobiles arrived to-day. By to-morrow you will have an easier way of going about."

Nadine let her eyes rest on him thoughtfully.

"How do you happen to know either about the automobiles—or their arrival?" she asked.

"I am one of the assistant freight agents of the railroad," said Hutchinson. "This afternoon, also, I happened on another curious bit of information. That is really why I am sitting here boldly advising you about what you doubtless know more about than I. I was arranging in the village, at the livery stable, for a horse for myself when a woman entered. There is but one manager, and I stopped while he attended to her inquiries. She wanted a horse and runabout for a few days, to keep at the Carson stables.

"Everybody in the village, of course, knows Carson's deserted condition, and the liveryman naturally made inquiries. She said she was a relative of the lodge keeper, and had been engaged to superintend the usual summer cleaning at Carson, but that the trip from the lodge to the house was too far, and she must have a horse. I do not know what arrangements she concluded. Quite naturally, however, I connected them with you, madam."

"Ah!" said Nadine. "I should not have called such acute ratiocination 'quite' natural."

Hutchinson laughed softly.

"You score," he said. Then quietly: "On my return, I found Miss Claudia on the porch, waiting for you to come back from your ride, and I narrated the incident. For some reason, she took it to heart."

"That is probably the reason she was so anxious to telegraph some—some of my friends to join me," Nadine mused. "And she did not wish to frighten me, and so asked me to send for my doctor, because I did not look well."

"Was there anything in the incident that could frighten you? It seems natural enough."

"It would be—only I know nothing about it. It may be natural enough, however. The care of Carson has not been under my personal supervision —" She paused, realizing that she

had by the phrase admitted her identity. "But, then, you knew, did you not?" She smiled at Hutchinson.

"Yes, I knew, Mrs. Carson."

"And Claudia need not have been concerned about your ignorance."

Hutchinson smiled back at her again.

"Was she concerned?" he asked.

"Ah!" said Nadine softly. "My wits are woolgathering, with all these tales of Carson and strange women. I should have reflected that Claudia's concerns are of more importance to me than to newer friends, who haunt hotel piazzas with uncanny perception."

She had created his opportunity for him, and Hutchinson took instant advantage of it.

"They are of grave importance to me, Mrs. Carson. I hope, even after you leave here, you will permit me to continue my acquaintance with yourself—and, through it—with Miss Claudia."

He rose as Claudia came down the piazza.

"Surely," said Nadine. "There are few women I know whom I like as well as Claudia; none whom I respect more. She has loyalty, kindness, and character."

Hutchinson, watching Claudia, made no answer.

Nadine rose as Claudia joined them.

"Did I not hear Mrs. Schultz invite you to the german to-night, Claudia?" she said.

"I have never been to a german in my life," said Claudia. It was with difficulty that she eliminated the "Mrs. Carson" with which she was used to ending her replies.

"She ought all the more to go, ought she not, Mr. Hutchinson?"

"I think so," he said. "Will you go with me, Miss Claudia?"

Claudia hesitated, with extreme embarrassment.

"I hope you will go, Claudia," said Mrs. Carson. "You will find it fun, and nobody ought to miss real fun. I shall spend the evening writing to Judge Wallace some very necessary instructions that I put off writing in order to ride to Carson this afternoon, but that

cannot be put off longer. He does not even know where I am."

"But—a german!"

Claudia looked down at her white dress.

"You dance, Claudia. I saw you waltz once. A german is easy; you merely watch and imitate. Who leads?"

"Langdon is leading with Miss Schultz," said Hutchinson. "They are well matched."

"Persuade her to go, Mr. Hutchinson," said Nadine, turning to the door. "Good night," she smiled over her shoulder.

"You will go?" said Hutchinson to Claudia.

"I—you know—the situation——" Claudia paused, then took the plunge. "I am her maid," she said, in low tones.

Hutchinson looked at her flushed face and downcast eyes.

"But Mrs. Carson herself wishes you to go," he said.

She stood absolutely still a moment. Then she looked up at him, her clear, dark eyes searching his face.

"You knew?" she said simply.

"Almost from the first," said Hutchinson.

"And—and—you do not mind?"

He took hold of the back of the chair in which Mrs. Carson had been sitting.

"Yes," he said, "I mind. I like it very much!"

There was silence between them for a brief and vital moment. Then Hutchinson spoke again slowly:

"There are other things I have also known almost from the first—since that first day I saw you arrive, handling all the affairs of baggage and settling so quietly and competently; moving among these other women with dignity; companioning, with tact, in what was perhaps a new situation for you, a woman—like Mrs. Carson. And some others I have found out in our long talks together, and in our quiet companionship. And one of these things, Miss Claudia, is that there is nothing I should like better than to have all this myself—to have it about me and with me the rest of my life. It is what I have long

wanted and never been able to find before."

Clauda took a long breath.

"Do you realize," she whispered, "that I have had only a country-school education, that I am just a plain farmer's daughter, that I went into this work because, after my father's death, I found I had no other way of making a living, no special education, just nimble fingers and a sixth sense that tells me when I am in the way? I—I am not your sort, Mr. Hutchinson."

He leaned toward her, smiling at her softly.

"Did you know," he said, "that I had only five years of schooling in all my life, and from a little, red schoolhouse that I used to leave to drive the cows home for mother to milk? And I am a tuberculosis cure. I have been cured for many years, and my affairs are so arranged that, should there be a return of my trouble, I will have enough to support myself and a wife. I hope it never will return, but you must consider it." He paused a moment. "As for your work," he continued, "I realize all these things about your work that have helped make you valuable. I told you I liked it."

"But your social life?" said the girl.

"Oh, I haven't any—I have been too busy. I have a few warm friends who will like and enjoy you. This is America, Miss Clauda; you have been living in a household where the world likes to go, calling itself the very cream of the social layer. You must have watched them, and you must have been in a position to hear the real truth about them. These things surely must mean little to you. You are very much my sort."

The girl shook her head.

"From what I hear," said Hutchinson gently, "even Mrs. Carson, who may choose her friends where she likes, picks them out for no other social reason than their worth and their congeniality. Tell me, do you think you would like to—marry me?"

She made no answer, but she looked up at him suddenly, and with a grave sweetness.

He put the chair that he was holding

deliberately aside. He looked about the darkened veranda, and found it deserted for the ballroom and the german. He moved suddenly closer to Clauda, into whose face a slow color was flaming.

"I am going to marry you, Clauda," said Hutchinson, and drew her into the circle of his arm.

CHAPTER VII.

About the time Mrs. Carson finished writing to Judge Wallace, that gentleman was being hurriedly driven to the parish house of Wrexford Thorne's church, where the rector lived, and where, the judge had been told, Doctor Carleton Thorne had gone.

The doctor had taken Clauda's dispatch to his brother, to ask the rector if he also could not get away for a few days at Saranac. He found his brother reluctant.

They were close friends. Theoretically each approved of marriage for the other, yet practically each man's life had brought him into those places where women are ill and unnerved, into lives made dreary with lack of self-control, and therefore needing help from doctor and rector. And so no mother giving up an idealized son to the influence of a stranger woman measured her more critically than either of these brothers would measure the woman the other chose.

Carleton Thorne had made an ideal marriage. He was happier than he could have believed possible, and therefore the more distressed over his brother, the more anxious that the misfortune of his love for Nadine Carson should become neither a tragedy of self-indulgence, nor yet one of self-denial. For all his understanding, there had been no word between them on the matter. Carleton Thorne knew there never would be. Wrexford was not that sort.

"You don't want to go up with me, Rex, and help put this thing through with Mrs. Carson?"

"I cannot see, Carl, where I could be of the least use. You, of course, are

different; you know what will be needed, you know about physicians, and nurses, and the expenses probably attached to such an undertaking."

"But this has been a thing you have wanted a long time, Rex. It is only decent that you should show an interest in it."

The rector settled his great shoulders back into his desk chair, and stared at the row of books beside him.

"I can do that," he said, "without going up there, where I am not needed."

"Then you really do not want to go?"

The rector looked away from the books at his brother.

"Trust you to hit the crux of the matter, Carl," he said gravely.

And then Judge Wallace knocked and entered.

"I followed you here," he said to his son-in-law. "I have news of Colin Carson."

Wrexford Thorne rose to find the judge a chair.

"You recall," said the judge, "that I believed it was Harding, the trustee Mrs. Carson discharged, who was behind Carson's escape? He had arranged a big blackmailing scheme with this woman who went with Carson. In our efforts to find them, I have had Harding watched pretty closely. To-day he sent the woman a telegram at Saranac. I had no idea they could get so far without discovery. I am sending men to Saranac to-morrow with Rawlins, Mrs. Carson's butler, who knows Carson. I would go myself, but it may be merely a false alarm, and I may need to be here, where they can reach me any moment."

The doctor looked at his brother. "But Mrs. Carson herself," he said, "is only three miles out of Saranac?"

The judge stared at him.

"I knew she had gone to the Adirondacks," he said, "but I did not know she was anywhere near Saranac."

"She has gone to look over the Saranac estate," said Carleton Thorne, "to see if it can be converted into a convalescent hospital for tuberculous patients."

"The Saranac estate," said Wrexford

Thorne suddenly, "would be the very place a man like Harding would send a paranoiac, whose lucid intervals could not be counted on, especially if he had a woman with him. It would be secluded, and a place that would not be strange to Mr. Carson himself. The accident of Mrs. Carson's going there would probably not occur to either of them."

"I recall," said Judge Wallace, "that the lodge keeper, who takes care of the estate, is an appointee of Harding's."

"I had a dispatch from Claudia to-night, saying that Mrs. Carson's first ride through the grounds of Carson had made her ill, and asking when it would be convenient for me to come."

Wrexford Thorne spoke hurriedly:

"I was with Mrs. Carson the time her husband was moved from one sanitarium to another. You recall the occasion, Carl. Harding was trying to get Mr. Carson out even then. At the beginning of the journey, Mr. Carson was apparently as sane as either of us: this deceptive sanity of the paranoiac. He even chose careful words in speaking. He thought he was being taken home. When he found himself in another sanitarium, he went to pieces. I have never seen anything like it. He abused his wife with every vile word; he threatened to kill her if he ever got out. If this creature is at Carson, and Mrs. Carson comes on him suddenly — When are you going up, Carl?"

"I cannot go until late to-morrow. I operate to-morrow morning. We had better wire Mrs. Carson."

"What can you wire her?" said the judge. "If you tell her to keep away from Carson, without giving a reason, she may not do so. If you tell her her husband is there, it may not prove true. And if he is there, it is quite possible that she may meet him on any road outside of Carson itself."

Wrexford Thorne opened a desk drawer for a railroad time-table.

"I am going up to-night," he said, "if I can catch the train. I will arrive but a little later than a wire would be delivered to-morrow morning."

He turned over the leaves of the time-table.

"This man is dangerous, and his hatred of his wife is the hatred of a lunatic." He looked his brother in the face. "As you said, Carl, it is only decent for me to show an interest in this project of a home for charity tuberculous patients, that I have been trying to arrange for years."

"Surely!" said Carleton Thorne. "I will join you in a day or two, with my wife, unless you need me earlier, in which case you can wire me."

CHAPTER VIII.

Nadine came down the piazza steps the next morning with Claudia to examine the two automobiles that had just been driven out from the village. There was a small roadster for her own driving and a larger touring car. From the piazza, Langdon watched her.

"Leave the roadster here," Nadine directed. "I am going to use it this morning. Is it in perfect running order?"

She came back to the piazza thoughtfully. All night she had been haunted by what she had begun to call her obsession—the vision of Colin Carson's eyes peering at her from the foliage. And because of her mounting fear and distaste, she had determined to waste no more time over the business that had brought her to Saranac, but to go over the house to-day.

Claudia had begged to go with her, and had been denied. Unpleasant as it was to Nadine to face the task alone, she believed it would be worse to be accompanied. There were too many memories about the place for her to wish to return to it watched by any other eyes.

As she came back on the piazza, Langdon came forward to meet her.

"Are you motoring to-day?" he asked.

"All morning, I think," she answered.

"Tell me," he said, "will the road we took to Carson yesterday be the nearest one to the house, if we take the path to the left where it divides?"

"To the house?" echoed Mrs. Carson.

"Yes. I am going to ride with Miss Schultz this morning. She has secured a horse, and she wants to see Carson, because of Mrs. Carson. She knows a lot about her, and is interested in the place. I thought I would take her to the house."

"You cannot do so this morning," said Nadine.

Almost unconsciously her voice took on the tone of annoyance of one whose privacy is unwarrantably intruded on.

Langdon flushed angrily.

"I cannot do so this morning!" he exclaimed. "Why, I have arranged it! Miss Schultz wishes to see the house."

"Strangers are not admitted without a permit," said Nadine, with sudden recollection of herself.

"But I have a permit."

"Miss Schultz has not."

"That will not matter," said Langdon.

"Your work—have you time to take a whole morning from it? Are you not here at Mrs. Carson's expense?"

Langdon, by this time, was thoroughly angry.

"Really!" he said. "I must be a judge of that. Pardon my having asked for information. We will go around by the regular road."

"I am sorry to interdict you," said Nadine. "You may go to-morrow, or any other day. This morning you may not go. I am going myself, and I shall want the place to myself."

"Are you joking?" said Langdon.

"No. I am really going."

"Well, what has that to do with Miss Schultz and me?"

Sudden impatience overtook Nadine.

"I said I wished to be alone—and you—you have your work."

"I can scarcely tell if you are in earnest. Really, you know, the place does not belong to you, does it? Even if you were once employed there!"

"No, perhaps not; nevertheless, for all practical purposes, it is mine. I am Mrs. Colin Carson."

Langdon looked at her in appalled silence. Nadine turned away, and entered the house for her motor coat and hat. Langdon stared after her, and,

in a vocabulary moderately expressive, he found no word that would suffice.

It was fully two hours later that Hutchinson, unfolding his New York paper, came out on the veranda for a smoke, and found himself surrounded by a group of women that included an irate Mrs. Schultz and a curious daughter.

"Mr. Hutchinson," said Mrs. Schultz, "you will just have to tell us what you know about these matters. You know Miss Murray better than the rest of us."

"But," rebelled Hutchinson, "I know nothing about any matters."

"Where have your eyes been all this exciting morning, then?"

Hutchinson declined to commit himself.

"Why, look out there at the garage!"

Hutchinson looked languidly; then with swift interest. For Claudia stood in earnest conversation with a tall and very distinguished-looking man, who was superintending a hurried pouring of gasoline into the tank of the touring car.

"It is very curious," said Mrs. Schultz. "This morning my daughter was going to ride to Carson with Mr. Langdon. She had ordered her horse, and suddenly Mr. Langdon sent her word that he was very sorry he could not go; that he had received orders from Mrs. Carson, who was employing him, to do some special work that morning, and that he found out nobody would be admitted to Carson without Mrs. Carson's permission. We came out on the porch about a quarter of an hour later, just as this girl with Miss Murray went down the steps to a small motor she afterward drove herself. Just before she started, she called Miss Murray to her, took out a small pad from her pocket, and wrote several lines on it. What was it she said then, Josephine?"

Miss Schultz took up the tale:

"She said: 'Claudia, they might not let even you through the gates if, for any reason, you wanted to send after me, so take this.' Then she went off, after telling Miss Murray again she could

not go with her. Mamma, I always said you had it wrong, and that it was not the young girl that was the companion."

Hutchinson smoked silently.

"Then," said Mrs. Schultz, "Mr. Langdon came out to ride to Carson, alone. We naturally took that opportunity to ask for explanations. He certainly did not seem to have any. He said he could get us a permit for any other time but to-day. Then I spoke of this mysterious girl—not unkindly——"

"Mamma, you said all sorts of things about her."

"Well, what if I did? They are probably all true. And Mr. Langdon said: 'You are making a mistake. She may be an adventuress, but she has ten or fifteen million dollars behind it, and so she probably won't mind being called one.'"

Hutchinson took out his cigar, and chuckled. Mrs. Schultz regarded him with distaste. Of course, she had interrupted his smoke and demanded his attention, but that was no reason for his ungentlemanly manner.

"Can you explain this, Mr. Hutchinson?" Mrs. Schultz insisted.

"I cannot," Hutchinson replied promptly. But he turned to look at Claudia and the strange man.

"And that, too!" Mrs. Schultz expounded. "He came on the morning train, the newspaper train, that hardly anybody comes on. The clerk told us. It is the Reverend Wrexford Thorne. The man they say is to be the next bishop of New York. He came about a half hour after the young girl went off in her automobile, and he asked for Miss Murray at once. Josephine heard him. It looks very queer to me. The whole hotel is excited about it."

"The hotel needs a tonic," said Hutchinson.

"One doesn't get the Reverend Wrexford Thorne every day," said Miss Schultz. "He is the handsomest man, for a rector, that I have ever seen. I call him simply stunning. What can he want with Miss Murray?"

Hutchinson was asking himself the same question. Then Claudia suddenly

saw him on the porch. Even at the distance he was from her, Hutchinson saw her sudden change of expression. She said a few words to the man beside her, and then beckoned to Hutchinson.

Mrs. Schultz beheld him cover the space between the porch and the garage with the utmost speed.

"He does know something," she said.

"Mamma," said Josephine, "mamma, it has just occurred to me! You do not suppose—oh, you do not suppose this girl could be Mrs. Carson herself?"

Mrs. Schultz looked blankly at her daughter, while into her face came a slow tide of unaccustomed crimson.

"Surely—surely—it could not be!"

"It explains a good many things."

"If—if—it is—what a chance we have missed!"

"And how we have snubbed her—oh, and last night's dance, mamma! We didn't invite her, because we thought she was a maid! Mrs. Colin Carson here!"

"I wonder what we can do about it?" said Mrs. Schultz mournfully.

They turned to watch the garage. The automobile was backing out into the road. Mr. Thorne himself was at the wheel. Claudia and Mr. Hutchinson sat in the back.

CHAPTER IX.

The gate was unlocked and the lodge empty when Nadine reached it. She took note of it, as a carelessness that must be corrected. She closed the gate and reentered her motor, driving it slowly over the roads she had not seen for so many years.

As she turned into the drive that, with another half mile, would bring her to the house, she saw coming toward her a woman who, even at a distance, seemed conspicuously handsome. Nadine slowed up, examining her. She was tall, and she walked well. Across her left cheek lay a long scar that gave her the look of a woman who had a story.

Nadine brought her machine to a stop. This was doubtless the woman of whom Langdon and Mr. Hutchin-

son had spoken; yet she did not look like a caretaker, unless she was one of the many "cures" who work at anything.

"Have you come from the house?" said Nadine.

The woman looked at her curiously a moment before she answered:

"Yes. Why?"

"Is it open?"

"No, it is locked. You cannot go in."

Nadine merely nodded.

"Are you the woman who is cleaning it?"

The woman hesitated again. Then she said: "Why do you ask?"

"I wanted to know. Also, I want to know its condition."

"What can it matter to a mere sight-seer?"

Nadine spoke shortly:

"Are you employed here?"

"You might call it that."

"Who employs you?"

The woman gave her a suspicious look.

"What are you doing here?" she countered. "They do not allow visitors. You cannot go into the house."

"Will you answer my question?" said Nadine.

"No, I will not!" said the woman.

"And I think you had better turn around and go back. Strangers are not permitted to enter."

"I am permitted," said Nadine.

She realized that she must either excuse her abrupt inquiries by an announcement of who she was, and her right to inquire, or give them up and go on. She chose the latter course.

"Very well," said Nadine, with a little nod.

She threw in the clutch of her machine, and sped on.

The woman stood in the road, looking after her with apprehensive eyes. There was only one woman in the world who had permission to enter the house she had recently left, only one woman who would probably feel herself at liberty to accost anybody she saw coming from the house in this manner. But she knew, from very late information,

that Mrs. Carson was nowhere near Saranac. She found herself wishing that she had taken advantage of many opportunities in which she might have seen Mrs. Carson. Then she reassured herself. This was probably merely an impertinent and somewhat venturesome hotel guest.

Carson was the one place that its owner's wife was said never to come near. For years it had been utterly deserted and neglected. The woman turned and went on her way to meet the absent lodge keeper.

Nadine brought her machine to a crawling pace as she approached the house. Massive and gray, it rose from the hill on which it stood, indescribably desolate in its desertion.

The shutters were closed everywhere, save in the corner of the second story. Nadine remembered, with a pang, that these rooms had been her own the month she had spent in the house. No sign of life was visible, but the road to the house was well cared for, the veranda was newly swept. The place had an air of being watched over. It was in good repair.

Nadine saw that the morning sun flooded the veranda and the front of the house, and considered its benefits to her probable patients. Yet she could not bring herself to control the shuddering distaste the house brought her. She wished she might tear it down and rebuild. Then she reproached herself anew. This was sheer sentimentality, and it appeared to be growing on her.

She brought her little car to a stop, and got out, moving slowly up the steps to the pillared porch. As she did so, she fancied she heard a window sash flung up. She paused.

"I should have brought Claudia with me," she said nervously.

She stood silent, listening, but there was no other sound.

When one stands alone before a deserted house that holds the ghosts of other days, one's imagination plays odd tricks. Nadine found herself listening for fancied footfalls. She had the feeling of being watched behind those closed shutters. She turned from them

a moment, recalling how she had first stood on this porch, looking out over the pine-clad hills to the dim, blue mountains, drinking in its beauty, planning how she could fill the place with others who would enjoy it.

She remembered how, a little later, she had watched her husband ride up the drive on a horse whose mettlesome quality rebelled against the spur that was being driven remorselessly into its flank. Even as she had found herself concerned over the way the horse was being handled, its master had flung himself off at the veranda steps, and, holding the rein, he had given the horse so merciless a beating that she had cried out against it. She had grasped her husband's arm and called his name, but he had not even heard her. Yet her hand on his arm had loosened his hold on the rein, and the plunging horse had broken loose.

Colin Carson had turned on her furiously, and she had seen for the first time the look of unbridled rage she came afterward to know so well. She had thought he was going to strike her, but she had not flinched, staring steadily at him, as his abusive words were flung at her. Yet when the torrent of abuse stopped, and, seizing her, he rained sudden kisses on her face, she fled with terror, followed by his strange laughter.

She could still see herself, a mere girl not quite twenty, absolutely unprotected in this lonely place that held only a group of terrorized servants, hiding from the man who had married her, sobbing out her fear and her loneliness among the pines and the hills that closed her away from the world.

"Shall I never be rid of these poisonous memories?" she murmured. "Is the whole world to turn a charnal house because of one man's madness?"

Then there came to her the vision of another face that had begun to measure for her the meaning of all of her past pain. The brow broad with a clear pallor of skin; the eyes the gray-green of the strongly willed, set in dark rims that deepened their direct gaze; the nose straight and strong, the jaw domi-

nant. In profile the short curve of the upper lip, the set of the head on the powerful shoulders were ascetic; but, turned full on one, the face was intensely willed and passionate.

She went back over their first encounters, when there had seemed no need of all those usual delicate adjustments of the masculine mind to the feminine, comprehension of each other came so easily to them. She recalled her slow spiritual drifting toward him, her turning away from a hundred other interests to work with him, her finding of her first real friendship. There had been days when, with her hands so full of the wealth of these hours, she could hold no more. If this could have but endured, if love had not followed with its unceasing need of seeing him, of hearing him, of being near him, with the pain of its restraint that must keep her always aloof, how they might have filled the days with more happiness than is usually given to men and women for their daily need. And here Nadine's thoughts paused before a new question.

Had not this thing that she called friendship always been love? The miracle of felicitude that occurred again and again with each new congeniality that they discovered, the sentient and higher substance that each mind struck from the other, had been there from the first, and was surely more than mere friendliness. She wondered if she could have known the worth of love that understood and was kind, had she not first endured the life that this desolate house where she now stood symbolized for her. Nor must she forget that it was this life that had earned for her the power of these hoarded millions to use for good.

She turned to the door, and, holding the keys a moment in a last reluctant hesitation, she finally plunged the key into the lock and turned it.

The hallway met her dark and chill. She paused and looked about her. Above the console at one side, a great mirror looked down on her, framing her slender, blue figure with a mysterious background of darkened walls. On the con-

sole lay several packages that seemed to have been but recently tied in paper, for no dust lay on them. Nadine examined them. They were grocery supplies.

"Some things for the dinners of those working in the house," she said.

But the house gave small sign of having been recently opened, save for marks in the dust on the hardwood floor, of footsteps that led up the stairway to the second floor.

Nadine went into the drawing-room, with its shrouded furniture and shuttered gloom. Vague noises fell on the silence, the noises that hover about an empty house—creaking boards—a door in the distance that seemed to slam as with some gust of wind.

Nadine returned to the hall, and went slowly through the adjoining rooms, noting where they could be changed to serve her purpose. This room would do for a consulting room. The dining room needed no changes. The kitchen seemed in good condition. It looked as if it had been lately used.

The shadow of the house lay heavy on her spirit. She felt she could never again take pleasure in it, never enter it without depression. She came back to the stairway, and paused, considering once more if it would be a reckless waste of money if she should tear the place down and rebuild it. With a sigh, she concluded that it would. The house was perfectly adapted for the use to which she wished to put it, but how she disliked it!

It took her several minutes to summon enough courage to mount the stairway. She went through the rooms on the second floor with more minute care than those below, leaving the suite in the western wing, that had been her own, until the last. The upstairs of the house had evidently been recently cleaned. It could be put into immediate use, with scarcely any refurbishing.

At the entrance of the small hall that led to her own rooms was a spiral stairway that climbed to a tower from which the view was unsurpassed. This had escaped the cleaning-up process, for in its accumulated dust it bore the mark

of footsteps and a hand on the banister. Nadine looked at it as she hesitated before the closed door of the rooms that were hardest of all to enter.

With what high ideals of marriage she had entered this new life; ideals won from no training ever given her in the household where she had spent her narrowed girlhood, but wrung from some heritage of womanhood and maternity long forgotten. How young she had been, how hopeful, how full of faith!

She turned the handle of the door, and entered. For a moment she could scarcely credit her senses. A faint fragrance reached her first, the fragrance of some powerful sachet unfamiliar to her. The room was shaded and quiet, but very surely it was a room in actual use. On the dressing table were a woman's toilet requisites. Across the couch in the window was flung a silken negligee. A pair of woman's slippers lay on the floor.

Nadine's first thought was that the woman who had been cleaning probably stayed there at night. It was a long way back to the village. But the toilet appointments were of ivory, and the negligee one of a woman of leisure.

Nadine flung open the window, looked about her a moment, and then, stabbed by the sudden intimate familiarity of the room, she turned to the doorway of the bedroom beyond.

With her hand on the doorknob, she paused. Either her imagination was once more playing her curious tricks, or she had distinctly heard a movement in the room beyond. It was as if, with the noise of the opening window, some one had awakened and sat up suddenly in bed. Then, as she held the knob, hesitating, it turned in her grasp, and the door was flung suddenly open.

Nadine gave a long, low cry. For she had come into the very arms of a powerful man, a man with malignant eyes, who held her by the arms and looked at her with a low laugh of excited pleasure; then more quietly as she stood turned to stone, facing him silently; then, with the laughter quite gone, and

rage deepening and lightening the shifting gaze, and with lips drawn back in a snarl that made the face one of some wild beast of prey.

"So! It is you!" he said. "You hunting me down again! You, who have come here, where I have hidden myself to rest and get well, to hound me back to your cursed captivity, to put me under lock and key, to have me followed, and watched, and guarded!"

He tightened his hold on her until her arms ached.

"I saw you the other day," he went on. "I saw you riding with one of your lovers, one of the men my money brings about you, one of the men your freedom from me gives you chance to exploit. I came near killing you then, nearer than I have come any of the dozen times I have meant to kill you. I would have done it, had I thought you were planning to come here. How could you get in this house? How dare you come into it?"

He shook her horribly.

"This is my house," he said. "Do you hear? This is my house."

Nadine's voice died. With utter helplessness, she stared at the snarling face.

He laughed again. "I thought you were Marta come back," he said. "Marta, who ought to be in your shoes! Marta, who really cares about me, who has cared all these years you were keeping me locked up. It was Marta I should have married, not you. You always hated me! Almost as much as I hated you when I got tired of you!" He looked at her more closely. "I haven't had much chance to be tired of you lately, have I? I am going to kiss you. I am going to kiss you before I kill you. I am going to kiss you until I'm tired of you again, and then I'm going to kill you."

He bent his leering face down on hers, holding her to him, laughing with shrill glee at her struggling; holding her helplessly in his grip.

"Colin," she whispered. "Colin, let me go!"

"Let you go!" He still laughed. "I'll never let you go! A fine wife you make a man! I'll keep you here to see the

difference between you and Marta. I'll keep you here, locked in, as you have kept me; tied up, as you have kept me; tied tight, while you look on at Marta, as I looked at you riding the other day. Let you go? You'll never get away from here, my lady."

For a moment, contemplating this project, the man's grasp relaxed. And in the moment Nadine sprang loose, and flung the door to between them. Almost she gained the other door into the hall, where safety might lie. Her hand was on the knob when the man reached her. His long arm shot out, grasping her throat and waist. His voice rose to a wilder note of triumph:

"Oh, you will, will you? Not yet—not yet! This is not quite the end of you. You have too long stood in my way. With you gone, there is nobody to hunt me into a hospital. With you gone, I am free—keep still!" For Nadine had made one more desperate struggle, putting forth all her strength.

Pitted against the maniacal impulse of the man, her struggling was absolutely ineffectual. He lifted her from her feet and carried her to the bedroom. Holding her wrists with one hand, he tore the covers from the bed with the other. Nadine still struggled. He dropped his covers a moment, and struck her savagely across the head, half stunning her. Then, still holding her, he flung a sheet under one foot, and, with his free hand, he tore it lengthwise, and then into narrower strips. He tied her hands behind her, and held her against the brass bars of the bed, where he stopped to look at her. Nadine shuddered at the look.

"No," he snarled, "no, I do not want you."

He tore the other sheet into strips, and bound her to the bars of the bed, feet and shoulders, waist and neck.

"If you scream," he said, "I'll tie your mouth up."

In the old days she had been used to quiet him, looking at him steadily. She fixed her eyes on him now, but she could not keep them there, for before them swam the vision of the dog he had once tied in the same manner

as she was now tied, while he cut it to pieces, to prove that it would love him no matter what he did. It had been the only thing in all the world that had loved him.

Nadine shut her eyes as he moved about her.

"Colin!" she said. "You cannot really mean to hurt me. You must believe that you were kept in a sanitarium for your own good, not mine. I had no wish to make you unhappy, only to keep you from harm."

A hoarse protest stopped her.

"No, no! I do not mean to really hurt you. I mean just to kill you, that's all; just to kill you, just to kill you! And not all at once, either; but little by little, as you have killed me; a little here and a little there."

He backed away from her to the door, and went out. She heard him go downstairs and shut and lock the hall door. She tried her bonds; they yielded not an inch. Then she tried the use of her voice. Call on call sped forth into the silent air. Then she heard him tearing the paper from the bundles in the hall and bounding up the stairs.

He stood in the doorway looking at her a moment, gnawing at the knuckles of his hand until the raw places on it bled afresh, and his teeth, as his upper lip drew back over them, were flecked with blood.

"Nobody will hear you," he said. "There is nobody but Marta, and she will not be back for an hour. Scream! I like it. Scream!"

Nadine watched him with every fiber strung to the breaking point.

"What! What! No more screams? We'll see—we'll see! You will scream yet. See, look through that door. I am going to set fire to all the curtains there. The room will burn—first the paper on the wall, then the whole room! I did it once. It was beautiful! The blaze runs in little rivulets over the paper. It will get down to the floor, and there will be smoke that will choke you, and yet you will be alive. And the flames will come nearer and nearer while you watch them, and you will be still alive. And they will scorch your

feet and burn them, and your hands, and clothes, and body. If the rags holding you burn, you will be afire by then, and it will not matter, and the whole room will be afire, and you will not be able to get out. And your long hair will burn! And your eyes! And you will still be alive, burning all over. And I shall be up in the tower, looking down on you. I shall watch you burn."

He took from the table a box of matches.

"This is better than just to choke your breath out of you. This is better than to starve you. This will be good to watch."

He passed through the door into the other room. She heard him pause, and begin to laugh again. She saw him hold blazing papers for a moment until a faint glow wavered over the curtains in the front windows of the room. She saw him wait until the glow deepened, and then go laughing out into the hall. She heard the tower stairway creak with his ascent.

CHAPTER X.

"The road to the right, Mr. Thorne," said Hutchinson. "You can see the marks of Mrs. Carson's machine ahead of you. Somebody has gone by on a horse."

Wrexford Thorne said nothing. He had his own depression to contend with. Carson was not a place where he would have deliberately chosen to come. Yet, having seen the look that Colin Carson had given his wife when he found he was not to be released, and heard his threats, there seemed no other way. He knew perfectly why Nadine had never returned to Carson. And he could guess at her reason for going there alone. It did not make his necessity to follow her any easier.

As he drove the car through wonderful woods and out again over low hills that gave a view of range on range of mountains, he saw none of the beauty about him. Only the loneliness reached him. He found himself marveling how any older woman could send a young girl alone to a place like this with Colin

Carson. Even six years ago this man's wild recklessness had been on every tongue. He could never have been a man whom any woman would wish to see married to a girl she cared for, even a little.

Over the soft hum of the motor there reached them the sound of galloping hoofs. Down a path that branched off the main road came Langdon, urging his horse. He waved at them, calling something. Thorne brought his machine to a standstill until Langdon reached them.

"Hutchinson!" said Langdon breathlessly. "This morning I found out that she was Mrs. Carson. She would not let me bring Miss Schultz to the house this morning because she said she was going there herself, and wished to be alone. But a big, old, deserted place like that is no place for a woman alone. I thought it over while I was working, and then I started toward the house, but I did not want Mrs. Carson to see me. She had said so emphatically that I was not to go there."

"It seemed to me—I am not sure—but it seemed to me when I came near I heard screams—some woman calling for help. But when I got there there was no sound. Mrs. Carson's motor is in the driveway, but the door is locked. I called, and knocked, and rang. Then I heard your horn, and——"

"Get in!" said Wrexford Thorne. "Leave your horse here, and get in. Hurry!"

His face had whitened. His hand trembled on the wheel as he urged the car to its utmost speed.

"Hutchinson," he called over his shoulder, "lean forward, and keep the horn going."

"My God!" said Hutchinson, as the house came in sight, set on the hill around which the driveway wound.

Smoke was pouring from the closed shutters; and from the open window of the room beneath the tower flames glowed, and wavered, and trembled.

The men flung themselves from the car.

"The windows," called Wrexford Thorne. "Break through them here."

He ran up the steps of the porch, flinging himself against the resisting shutters. But they had been built to keep out intruders from a house that was far from the help of others, and even under his savage onset they did not yield. He wrenched at the fastenings of the heavy door, searching desperately for some quicker way of entrance.

"You can't do it," called Langdon. "I tried every way to get in only a little while ago."

"The shutters are open on the second floor," said Thorne. "I am going up to the roof of the porch. Hutchinson, stand on the railing by the pillar, and let me have your shoulder. Then you two can try to pry these shutters open."

Clauda turned swiftly to the automobile, and tore from the rail the heavy lap robes. As Thorne reached the roof of the porch, Hutchinson flung him the robes. Never had either man been so glad of his great height.

"Throw them about you! Over your head! The whole place is blazing."

But as he faced the rooms whose windows overlooked the porch, Wrexford Thorne saw that the flames were in only one room, the one with the open window, to the right of him. From the closed windows to the left small ribbons of smoke were eddying, but he could see no flames.

Hutchinson called to him:

"We will get in from down here."

He was attacking the heavy shutters with the hammer from the tool chest of the small car. Its blows cut through wood and glass.

"Stay outside, Claudia," called Hutchinson. "Some one must be outside."

He rushed into the house with Langdon. Then, through all the roar of flames, high above them, there rose long calls of shrill laughter. Claudia looked up at the tower. From its open window leaned a face Claudia knew she could never forget through the years. Even through its veil of smoke, it struck the old terror to her heart, and the old hatred. She shuddered, forcing her

eyes to Wrexford Thorne, on the roof below.

Smoke poured in volumes from the window farthest from the flames, where Thorne had broken the glass, choking him and blinding him. He waited an instant to get his breath. He could see nothing inside the room save these swirling masses of smoke and a wall of fire beyond an open door. If she were there—Nadine—in that blazing room!

He sprang over the sill, and steadied himself by the head of a bed near the window. Little tongues of flame were darting along the wall paper about him, fanned by the draft of the window he had broken; but they did not light the obscurity of the room. If Nadine were in the room beyond he must go there. He drew the lap robe about him, and, in the smothering gloom, felt his way down the bed. She might still be alive.

"Nadine! Nadine!" he called. The acrid smoke tore at his lungs.

Then he paused. Some sound reached him.

"Nadine!" he called again, stifling, choking, striving to keep his senses.

And then suddenly his hand fell on another hand, a hand bound to the bars of the bed, and over his arm fell masses of long hair from a head lying motionlessly on the footrail of the bed. He bent over the figure tied and bound, facing the blazing furnace that each moment crept nearer, and caught at his ebbing strength with some higher power than will.

He ceased all thought, working only by instinct, with mad haste, lest unconsciousness should overtake him before he freed her.

The wall of flame crept nearer. Beyond it, on the other side, he could hear Hutchinson calling:

"Thorne, Thorne! We are going back. We are coming up to the porch roof to help you."

And still Wrexford Thorne tore at the knots and bands. Bits of burning wall paper began to fall from the ceiling. He flung his robe over Nadine's head. The wall of flame was in the room now, swaying toward the open window. With

one final wrench, he tore her loose, and, lifting her in his arms, wrapped in the heavy robe, he crawled to the window.

The sill seared his fingers, the smoke caught at his throat until it seemed he could not draw another breath. For a moment he swayed dizzily, the hot breath of the wall of fire close upon him, and then suddenly he was over the sill and on the roof of the porch, holding Nadine, and breathing the fresh air of the pine woods again, and Hutchinson and Langdon were helping them down, and somewhere Claudia had found water.

He knelt beside Nadine, holding her head on his arm, while Claudia bathed her face, hearing nothing but the heart-beat that told him he had not come too late—five minutes more, and it would have been too late—and it had taken him ten interminable hours to reach her—seeing nothing but the white face with the livid mark of a blow across the forehead under the loosened hair, and the small, bruised hands, with their swollen wrists.

Another peal of laughter trembled from the tower.

Langdon caught at Hutchinson's arm.

"God!" he cried. "Did that come from the house?"

The pine boards of the upper story were shriveling and swaying, and now over the roar of the flames the laugh changed and paused suddenly, and then rose a cry of rage, the hoarse call of some wild beast in pain; and out of the window to the little balcony of the tower sprang a creature with blazing

clothes, that wrung its hands in a frenzy of rage.

"Colin Carson!" Claudia whispered.

Wrexford Thorne looked up over the face on his arm with the purple mark on its forehead, and at his sudden movement Hutchinson caught at him.

"We can't get up there, the whole place is afire!"

Langdon was calling: "Jump—jump clear of the porch!"

But the flames burst into higher tongues. And then suddenly the tower seemed to sag and bend. There was a swift outburst of orange smoke, a sullen roar, a crash, and a blinding sheet of flame. The tower had fallen within the burning building.

No sound came from the three men. White and silent, they stared at the writhing mass of flames, ebbing and flaring over hissing columns of smoke.

Claudia buried her face in her hands.

Then Wrexford Thorne lifted Nadine in his arms.


"Get her away before she revives," said Hutchinson, in a low voice. "Get her back to the hotel, where she can have a doctor. Get into the car. I'll drive it. You follow in the roadster, Langdon."

The car moved slowly down the hill. The men looked back a moment as the curve of the road hid the blazing house from their sight.

Nadine's head stirred as it lay on Wrexford Thorne's shoulder, the long hair brushing his cheek. She moved softly within his arm, and then lay still, her eyes opening on his face as he bent over her.



HER CHANCE



WILLIAM SLAVENS Mc NUTT

MIKE HOGAN was— Don't laugh! I know it seems superfluous to add his nationality, but I also know an Indian in a fishing camp on the southeastern Alaska coast, who has curly hair, a nose as unmistakable as the three little balls, and all the actual cash in the tribe. He runs a trading store. The sign over the door reads: "I. Rosenstein."

Mike, however, was as thoroughly Irish as his name, an elemental and somewhat wayward son of that great, simple, wholly inexplicable race of heroes of the abstract; ready to fight and die for some vague, half-understood principle; impelled to mighty deeds of valor or persuaded to martyrdom by some seemingly slight and whimsical fancy; mellow with the happy-go-lucky optimism of the negro; tempered with the fighting spirit of the wild Bedouins; swayed by an emotional nature that savors in its intensity of the sensualism of the Orient; steadied by a wonderful sense of family faith and loyalty almost the equal of the Hebraic racial instinct; saturated with a queer, homely, hearthstone and barnyard sort of superstition; scornful of forms and ceremonies, yet moved by them to the point of fanaticism; a chaotic fusion of the salient characteristics of half the races of the world, and similar in entirety to none.

An ex-member of the Northwest

Mounted Police, Mike had seen service in Dawson City in the wild days of the first great stampede to that famous camp; with a Canadian cavalry regiment in South Africa during the Boer war, he had won the coveted Victoria Cross.

He was tall, rawboned, red-headed, brilliantly blue of eye; a splendid animal!

Utterly unmoral, to explain ethics to him was to convey to a man born blind the beauty of a Turner sunset. In place of a sense of duty or patriotism, he had personal pride; hence his Victoria Cross and honorable discharge from the N. W. M. P. In place of a conscience, he had a hot, tumultuous, absolutely contradictory Irish heart.

Being Irish, he was "Agin' the government," and did hard manual labor in spite of his medal and service record.

During the summer of 19—, he was employed as a "skinner" at Hennigan's camp on the construction of the new railroad, threaded through the almost wholly unexplored mountain fastnesses of northern British Columbia to tap the coast at Prince Rupert, just at the foot of Alaska.

Hennigan's camp was situated about forty miles from the coast on the banks of the Skeena River. Rising almost from the door of the bunk house, a sheer wall of rock towered perpendicularly for five thousand feet; the limited horizon was scarred in every direction

with great, jagged peaks, capping mountainsides so steep that the different bends in the narrow river valley seemed like great separate wells. Some thirty-five miles below was the little fishing town of Essington; an equal distance above was a small settlement known as Kitselas; between was scenery.

When work shut down for the winter, they left Mike there alone in charge of the horses.

He had nothing to do but feed the animals twice a day, cook his own meals, and keep himself free as best he might from the maddeningly persistent, brain-wrecking devils of solitude that so cunningly tempt the sanity of a man alone and idle in the wilderness.

His camp was the halfway house, where any one traveling between Essington and Kitselas would stop for the night; but such travelers at that time were few and far between.

Mike opened the door of the bunk house about three o'clock one gloomy afternoon in February, and looked out. The dull, gray clouds were driving low over the mountains before the wind that sounded a whining, minor dirge on its forest lyre; a wail of mourning for the havoc about to be wrought when the tune should change to the crashing battle hymn of the elements, and the army of the Storm King descend for yet another struggle in its eternal war on all material substance, breathing or inanimate, that is in or of the wild.

Mike's weatherwise ear caught the strain of menace in the solemn harmony; he put on his mackinaw and cap, and started for the stables.

"It's early ye're gittin' yer grub this night, byes," he muttered to the horses, as he stuffed their mangers with hay. "Ye'll git it early or not at all, I'm thinkin'! An' it comes off dirty as it looks, I wouldn't wade out o' me bunk by six o'clock this night to feed me mother's only son, an' him starvin'."

By the time he had finished feeding, the blizzard was well under way, and a swirl of wind-driven snow enveloped him as he stamped into the bunk house.

He cooked his supper and ate it listlessly; smoked a little without enjoy-

ment; picked up an old magazine, and, after a few minutes' ineffectual attempt to concentrate his mind on a story, flung it into a corner, and commenced restlessly pacing the floor.

"Howly Mother!" he muttered. "It's clane batty I'm goin', tied here in this hole!"

He raised his clenched hands high over his head, stretching, every muscle taut, strained with the effort to spend the pent-up energy that choked and tortured him.

"Oh, fer wan good night in town! The good hot jolt o' the whisky on me innards! The foine crack o' some rangy lad's fist on me jaw! Anny dommed thing to bust this—this nawthin'!"

About ten o'clock as he sat playing solitaire, there came the sound of a voice calling, faintly distinguishable over the roar of the wind. He sprang to the door, and two snow-covered figures, heavily muffled, stumbled over the threshold as he flung it open. One of them fell, sprawled out, just inside.

Mike leaned quickly over, tore off the muffler and cap, and jerked to his feet a slender young man about twenty-five years old.

"Are ye froze anywheres?" said Mike, shaking him.

"N-n-no, sir! Oh, n-n-no!" stammered the young fellow. He said it very earnestly, with a little cringe, like a broken-spirited child disclaiming some fault to a brutal parent. His companion, still muffled, was crouched over the red-hot stove.

"Hey, there! You damn fool!" called Mike. "Come away from that stove till I see is the frost into ye."

The boy clutched his arm.

"Oh!" he said pleadingly. "Don't swear! It's—it's a lady!"

"A la— Well, I'll be— Oh! Beggin' yer pardon, ma'am, I didn't take note! Yer long coat— But ye must come away from the fire, ma'am, till I see are ye bit. Ye might be, an' not know it."

"I'm all right, thank you," she answered.

She made no move to take off the wrap that covered her head and face, all

but the eyes. Mike stepped over to her, and began to unwind it.

"I'm sorry to be rude to ye, ma'am," he said, bending over her, "but I must see if ye——" His voice trailed off in a little whistle of astonishment.

The girl furtively placed her finger to her lips, and nodded ever so slightly toward the boy. Mike straightened up.

"She's all right, me son," he said. He put his hands in his pockets and rocked back and forth on his heels, looking from one to the other with a fixed grin. "An' to think," he went on, "that the likes o' me should go an' swear right out loud before a lady!" A fit of laughter shook him.

"Oh, that's all right!" said the boy, joining in. "You didn't know, of course."

"Correct, me son!" said Mike. "I thought she wuz a mon, an' you thought she wuz a lady! Ah, but I'm fergittin'. Ye'll be wantin' a bit o' somethin' hot."

He busied himself with the frying pan.

The boy drew up a chair near the woman, and sat silent, watching her anxiously, evidently troubled by her strange abstraction. She sat motionless, listlessly staring at the stove, apparently taking no notice of anything. After a time he took her hand in his hesitatingly, as though fearing a rebuff, and when her fingers returned his pressure he smiled in happy relief, and leaned back in his chair with a sigh of contentment.

He had a thin, undecided face; large, brown, cur-dog eyes, the lovable cur kind, rather attractive in a way, but incapable of expression of any emotion save fear and gratitude. Of the negative good, the blind beggar's sign was writ so large in him the lack of a tin cup made him seem incomplete.

"Ye'll be mon an' woife, I take it," said Mike, setting out the dishes.

"Well—well, no, not yet. We're on our way now from Kitselas to Essington to be married there," the boy answered, embarrassed.

Mike stared.

"To Essington! Is there no praste or any wan at Kitselas that c'u'd——"

"Well, yes," said the boy, "yes, but you see there were reasons—that is, you see——"

Mike made a deprecating gesture.

"'Tis plenty ye've said, me son. If it's curiosity I live to be hung fer, I'll be atop o' the ground come judgment day."

When the supper was prepared, the woman murmured that she was not hungry, and the boy, after solicitous urgings, sat down alone. He was so weary that he could scarcely keep awake to finish his meal.

"I—I guess I'll have to lie down," he muttered drowsily. "How shall we do——"

"Right here, me lad," said Mike. "You take this cot here be the stove; the lady can hov my bunk in the corner, and I'll roll up on the flure."

The boy bent over and kissed the woman, with the loose-lipped, sleepy kiss of a drowsy child; murmured a half sentence unintelligibly, and was fast asleep, full dressed, before his head touched the pillow.

Mike washed the dishes in silence; then stepped over to the sleeping boy, and tweaked his nose sharply. The boy made no move. Mike chuckled.

"Dead to the world!" he said.

He drew a chair up to the stove, and sat down, eying the woman with a quizzical, carnal grin.

"Well, Bertha," he said, "is it froze stiff yer neck is that ye cannot luk up to see the face of an old fri'nd that ye hov not laid eyes on since the old days in Dawson?"

The woman shrugged her shoulders wearily, and turned to him. She was young in years, perhaps twenty-eight, but her youthful features were stamped with the indelible brand of the world-old tragedy.

The face was strong. The chin firm and well rounded, the nose high and very slightly Roman, the forehead broad and low; the golden-brown eyes, wide set, bore witness that negative weakness had not been the cause of the ruin that was in them.

It was a face that had at some time been haughty, imperious; later, only re-

sentful and hard. But now there was in it the dawn of a positive patience; the signal of surrender of an erring, willful, but truly strong, spirit to the Supreme Master, with instinctive belief in the just mercy of His punishments, and faith in the certainty of His ultimate rewards.

"Aha!" said Mike. "Now we're more sociable like. Fwhat the devil's all this rot about yer goin' to Essington to marry with this young cub?"

"It's straight goods, Mike! They wouldn't marry us at Kitselas. They knew me there."

The cadence of education and good breeding was in her voice, blurred with the inflections of the underworld, but unmistakable.

Mike whistled.

"Ah! The lad has the stake, thin. He has not the luk of a mon o' money."

She laughed softly.

"Money! The poor kid's never had fifty dollars at one time in his life."

"An' ye're goin' to marry with him?"

"I am!"

Mike stared.

"I hov seen one mon in me day, an ould prospector up north he was, who spoke with as little sinse as yerself! I was detailed to take him outside whin he was sint to the asylum. Ye bring him to me mind. To my knowin', ye c'u'd hov wed with one who had his million in the days in Dawson; if ye w'u'd marry at all, for fwhy did ye not take him?"

"Because money wasn't what I wanted, Mike. Not even then! I didn't know what I did want in those days, but it wasn't money."

"I was mistuk! The mon I spoke of wuz not in yer class! Y'are a woman, an' I can bel'ave ye think ye mane fwhat ye say. I hear fwhat ye say, but fwhat the devil d'ye mane I dunno!"

"I mean that I've got what I wanted! Got what all the money in the world couldn't buy me! I've got an honest way out, Mike."

"I'm just tellin' ye that I know Billy Wicks offered ye that in Dawson!"

"Offered to marry me? Yes! You knew Billy; do you suppose a marriage

with him would be any more decent than the dance halls?"

Mike stroked his chin reflectively. "N-n-no, not dacint belike, but respectable."

She sat up, passionately earnest.

"Well, I'm going to wind up *decent*! Oh, I can do it! It won't be what I dreamed of when I was a girl!" She laughed a little bitterly. "I wasn't born in the gutter, Mike. But it will be clean, and honest, and right! Oh, my God!" Her voice was sharp with the pain of a long hunger. "Just to be right!" After a moment's silence, she went on: "They say it's impossible! Who says so? 'They!' 'They' say the river's our only way out! Do the men that are no better than I am all go that way? 'They' say that's different! Who makes it different? 'They!' Well, 'They' haven't got anything to do with this!"

"The boy here knows the whole business. He—he likes me, likes me right! And it's given him something in life to feel sort of big and worth while about because he's forgiving me so much.

"He's never had much chance to feel that way about anything; he's no good to go ahead and do anything for himself, and he's sort of weak and all that, but gee!" Her voice was suddenly crooningly tender. "Gee! He's a *good* kid!"

"It won't be easy. The right way never is. The boy hasn't any way to make much money, and I know we'll always be poor, but we've enough to get away somewhere and make a start, and we'll wind up *right*!"

Mike nodded his head slowly, with the air of one having just come to a definite conclusion. "I hov heard of thim," he said, "thim as walk an' talk with open eyes in their sleep. Very like ye will wake up soon an' we'll hov a nice, sinsible talk." He laughed contemptuously. "An' is it you that thinks the lad w'u'd stick?"

"I know it! Why, I'm as much of a godsend to him as he is to me! Why, Mike"—her voice was athrill with a glad wonder—"I'm—I'm of some real good to somebody! Oh, I think enough of the decency of his feeling for me not

to burden him if he had a chance, but he hasn't. He's an orphan, Mike; he never did have any home, and he's been kicked and cuffed around all his life in a world he don't know how to fight. Nobody's ever cared a snap of their finger for him. He's no good to anybody in the whole world but me, and I'm nothing to any one but him! He's an old-fashioned sort of kid, and we'll go away somewhere and just be an old-fashioned, homy couple all our lives. It's my chance, and his! Oh, I'm wild to get out! Away! Mike, do you think it will be cleared off so we'll be able to leave in the morning?"

"He will!" said Mike.

She caught her breath sharply, and her face went white.

"Mike! Mike! What do you mean?"

"An' is it you that's knowin' me all these years can ask it? D'y'e think I'm turned wood or some like since the days ye made so free o' my money in the halls in Dawson?"

"You—you wouldn't dare!"

"Fwhy not?" He grinned amiably.

"Is it the police ye're thinkin' of? Ye're just tellin' me they knew ye in Kitselas."

"Mike! For the love of God——"

"Aw, shut up!" He rose truculently to his feet. "I'm thinkin' it's some kind o' dope ye've tuk to eatin' since I knowed ye, ye talk that foolish! There's a Siwash fishin' camp fifteen miles below here; the river's open that far, an' the lad can git a boat from there down. He goes in the mornin'! Ye'll come by yer sinses in a week, an' thank me fer rididin' ye o' the whimperin' cub!"

A half hour later, panting like a trapped wild thing, disheveled, worn out from useless pleading with a stronger animal, who sensed absolutely nothing in the situation save a rival to be disposed of and a conquest to be made, the girl sank into a chair, beaten.

The man sat opposite, savage, adamant.

Thus they sat through the long night. The girl, motionless, praying in dry-eyed despair for the pitiful fragment of honor she was striving so desperately to salve from the wreck of her life; the man sullenly waiting for the morning

to end the respite she had managed to wring from him.

It was nearing dawn when the sleeping boy suddenly raised on his cot with a gasp of fright, and looked about him wildly.

"Bertha!" he called. "Bertha!"

The girl was at his side in a swift, tender rush, kneeling, clasping him close.

"Yes, dear, what is it?"

"Oh!" said the boy, with a note of infinite relief in his voice. "I was so scared! I dreamed that—that you were gone!" He smiled contentedly as he lay back on the pillow. "I thought that you—that you——" His voice trailed off in a drowsy murmur, and he slept again.

Then for the first time that night to the girl kneeling by the bedside came the relief of tears, and she clung to the boy's hand, weeping bitterly.

Mike watched the scene between the strange pair with no emotion save utter disgust. He had the carnivorous fighting animal's contempt for all that savored of weakness or fear of any sort.

As he sat sneeringly watching the sobbing girl, a puzzled look slowly gathered in his eyes.

There was something hauntingly familiar about the figure that knelt by the bedside, bent above the sleeping boy's outthrown hand, loosened hair a copper torrent about her neck and shoulders.

It stirred a train of jumbled memories that just eluded the grasp of his consciousness.

He leaned back in his chair, brows knit in an effort of memory.

The wall in front of him was plastered with pictures of prize fighters and queens of burlesque. As his puzzled eyes rested on the gaudy display, he gave a sudden start, and a comical look of amaze spread over his face.

In the center of the obscene array hung a faded chromo, a relic from the walls of Mike's ancestral hut among the peat bogs of his native isle.

It represented the Mary Magdalen kneeling at the feet of her Lord.

"Well, I'm dommed!" said Mike.

He rubbed his eyes, and carefully

studied the figure of the girl kneeling by the bedside. The resemblance in the attitude and in the fall of the disarranged hair was unmistakable!

The big Irishman felt an uncanny thrill as the blood of a long line of superstitious forbears stirred in him.

He crossed himself involuntarily, and, realizing his action, cursed horribly under his breath to assure himself that he didn't mean it.

"Sure," he muttered uneasily, "'tis ondacint fer the likes o' her to luk like thot. 'Tis a *howly* pickcher!"

He sat for some time glancing furtively, first at the kneeling girl, then at the faded chromo.

The sky had cleared, and it was fast growing light when he finally rose with

a decisive oath, picked up a towel, stepped outside, closing the door behind him, and vigorously washed his face, neck, and arms in the new snow.

Turning to reënter the shack, he paused with his hand on the door, scratched his shaggy red head, stared with amazed, questioning eyes at the mountains, and inquired helplessly of the wilderness in general: "Well, fwhat d'ye make o' thot?"

Going back into the cabin, he silently commenced preparations for breakfast. The ham in the frying pan, he stepped over to the sleeping boy, and shook him roughly.

"Come on, rouse out o' that!" he growled. "Git up, ye pup! It's yer weddin' day!"



THE SHIP OF DREAMS

IN the silver trail there's a sail to-night,
And a ship stands in from the far sea line—
A shape that never is seen by day,
In mist enshrouded and veiled in spray,
Bearing no store of mart or mine.

Out of the haven of heart's desire
Many a year she's overdue;
Dreams forgotten and visions old,
Yearnings bartered away for gold,
These are the wares she brings to you.

Spoil of the lands of long ago,
Treasure of years when the heart was young—
Tears she bringeth and childish woe,
Wistful longing and kiss of snow,
The hope untold and the song unsung.

You never shall hear her anchor chains,
Nor ever the sound of her flapping sail;
Yet eyes that are weary, and old, and dim,
Have seen her far on the ocean rim,
Sailing across the silver trail.

CHARLES W. KENNEDY.



THE GARDEN OF EDEN

By
HERMAN WHITAKER

AS the dugout flew past under the strong thrust of the Zapotec poleman, Consuelo straightened up from her washing, and gazed after him with all of the healthy curiosity natural to her fourteen years. A strong youth, straight and well muscled, his comeliness might be expected to set a pleasant reflection in any girl's eyes, and had he been in less of a hurry to meet his *novia* in the next village downriver, this story might have ended before it began; for, while the dark interest which the girl displayed watching him down to the next bend transcended her age, it was quite in accord with a physique that, for early development, could only be equaled by the luxurious growths of her native Tehuantepec jungles.

Though turned fourteen but yesterday, her growth easily exceeded that of seventeen-year-old girls in colder climates. The shoulders, bust, and arms that quivered in rhythm with her vigorous rubbing when she fell again to her washing, already exhibited that perfect modeling which is the birthright of every Tehuana; and if, stripping for a swim, later, her figure gleamed slimly golden against the jungle's dark-green veining, the promise was there. Both the living brown of her eyes and the soft sensuousness of the red mouth told that she bore within her the seeds of some man's future trouble; and after she had resumed her crimson petticoats and flowered *huipilita*—an armless bodice, cut marvelously high below and low above—she bloomed like a red flower on the yellow strand.

Unaware, however, of her own charms—in view of both her sex and certain smiles at her reflection in the water, it were better put, perhaps innocently, as yet, of their worth and purpose—she raised her calabash of wet linen upon her head, and pursued with balanced ease the path that led through palm and banana groves to the village, arriving at the door of the family *jacal* just as her mother looked out.

"Naughty one!" she exclaimed. "To linger over the washing, and I needing thee this hour. Off with thee to the *tienda* of San Felipe for a *quartilla* of *manteca* and *dos reales* of *arroz*. And see that thy feet fly, for if the *chili* be late for thy father's supper 'twill be the stick for the backs of us both."

A shapely Tehuana herself, as yet under thirty, she spoke with the eager volubility of harried mothers the world over, and if slightly different in form from the admonitions that the women of civilization deliver to their marriageable daughters, her conclusion—delivered while rapidly smoothing the girl's dark hair—was very like in essence.

"And do not forget, thou art now of an age to be settled. When but three months older I had already given thee birth, and Tomas, the *mayor domo* of San Angel, is looking hard thy way. Had I but answered his nod, the thing had already been done. But I waited—for this. Though 'tis now a year past since Don Oliver, the *Ingleso*, came to San Felipe, as yet he has taken no woman into his house. But he will—as he's a man he will. So if he break ground toward it with thee to-day, do not

flinch. If not—with civility, let it be, for frowardness is hateful in a woman—but still ask if he requires not a girl to keep his house. Ask without fail, for, even if he say no, still thou art entered into his mind, and once there, 'twill not be for him to cast thee out. Now, run!"

Consuelo did run—down the street of palm-thatched *jacales*, through the co-coas and bananas, along the overgrown jungle paths—at such speed that the agitation of her garments gave her the appearance of a rose tumbling in a wind. Indeed, as she came in sight of the two white men who were leaning on the sill of the store hatch at San Felipe, one of them used the simile to describe her crimson flutterings.

He added, laughing: "A customer for you, Oliver. What a picture she makes in her gold and scarlet. It would look mighty well in your house."

"Now, now, Bolton!" The other held up a protesting hand. "You know my views."

An Englishman of the stocky type native to the small midland towns, his large, mild face would have been commonplace but for the dreamy thought of his large blue eyes. These correctly indicated a naturally idyllic temperament that had been abnormally developed by early training in the symbolism of the English "High Church," yet which, very curiously, was balanced by a strong vein of practicability in worldly affairs. Without the latter compensation, he would probably have drifted into the evangelical ministry. With it, he had developed a conscientiousness of aim and purpose that could not have failed to earn him success—anywhere else than on a Mexican plantation. Pitchforked, however, by family influence into the managership of the rubber plantations of San Felipe in the heart of the Tehuantepec tropics, he was worse than a fish out of water amid the travail and passion, cruelty and lusts that went to make up its heated life.

Knowledge of it showed in Bolton's laughing answer:

"Yes, you darned Pharisee! I know the lofty contempt in which you hold

the rest of us for what you are pleased to term our vices. But let me tell you this: If you had taken a Tehuana to do your cooking when you first came here, you'd have fallen—like the rest of us. Well, I suppose that virtue has its own rewards; at least, it's to be hoped so, for it sure carries its own penalties. If you keep on eating out of your *enganchados'* cookhouse, do you know where you'll wind up? In the little cemetery at San Juan. That sort of grub will kill any white man." Shrugging at the grisly truth, he added: "When it gets them, how can you hope to escape it?"

"To tell you the truth, I do find it awfully rotten." The flicker of disgust which agitated his calm, powerfully expressed, nauseating recollections of the acres of thick *tortilla*, caldrons of *frijoles*, mountains of mushy rice, he had consumed in the course of the year. "But as regards the remainder of your charge, you do me an injustice. If I had hired a Tehuana, I believe that I should have had the common decency to preserve my distance. To put it in plain words, I don't see the necessity of a man's making his cook his mistress."

"You are forgetting the relation that is said to exist between the heart and the stomach. But here comes your customer, and I must be going." While mounting his horse that was tethered outside, Bolton concluded: "But you know, I'm from Missouri, and have to be shown. *Adios!* Whenever you feel like eating a decent meal, come over and see me."

"All right," Oliver answered, laughing. "Perhaps to-morrow."

His cheerfulness, however, was a bit forced, for the "Pharisee" still stuck in his throat. Indeed, his frown as he turned to wait upon her caused Consuelo to defer the execution of her mother's command to the last possible moment; whereby, quite unconsciously, she worked hand and glove with the fates. For, as he weighed out her lard and rice, Bolton's last skeptical remark pricked and prodded his mind on to the inevitable conclusion that, after all, he had undoubtedly neglected the wis-

dom of the old adage, "an ounce of showing is worth a pound of telling." While taking her *centavos* in payment, he arrived at it, the conclusion, in the nick of time that she propounded her question:

"Dost thou require a girl, señor, to keep thy house?"

Surprised at the coincidence, he could only stare, and, interpreting his silence unfavorably, she went on pleadingly:

"'Tis true, señor, that I am young, yet can I cook like a grown woman, and with a little help from Lolo, the woman of Señor Bolton, I shall soon learn to make the Americano bread and cook other dishes to thy liking. And see! Thy *camisa* is soiled and lacks a button. And here is a great hole! Oh, 'tis shame to have thee going thus. My fingers itch to be at thy sewing." Her dark eyes widely dilating, she concluded: "Take me, señor, else shall I fall to Tomas, the *mayor domo*, who is old and sharp-tempered."

The complimentary and other implications of the last sentence had almost undone her, for, while the intellectual idealist was debating the pros and cons of it, the fleshly man had taken pleasant note of her sweet face, general shapeliness, scrupulous cleanliness of her person and vestures; and becoming suddenly aware of it, the idealist dubiously inquired:

"How many years hast thou?"

"Fourteen, señor. Yesterday was my saint's day."

"Why, only a child!" he thought, and unaware, in his simplicity, that she was as much of a woman then as she ever would be, he continued enthusiastically: "Exactly what you want. Her mind is still plastic and can be easily molded. You can teach her to read and write, give her accomplishments, bring her up just like an English girl."

In a flashing vision he saw her at the full flower of her golden womanhood, a beautiful ensample wherewith to convict Bolton and others of the evil of their ways; and, seeing it, he committed himself to the irrevocable.

"If I hire thee, when——"

"This very day, señor." Eyes spark-

ling, red mouth and small teeth united in a brilliant smile, she chattered on while hastily bestowing her purchases in her bosom. "I will run—there and back. *Si, señor*, there is need. Thy house swarms with *insectos*, and thou thyself must be gotten at once into clean clothes."

And while, startled, he tried to realize these impending reconstructions, she turned and ran—again at such speed that her vestures flew to the four winds, revealing to his rather shocked gaze the spectacle of a golden girl in a crimson cloud.

If we did not have it upon the authority of the Scriptures that Eden was planted "eastward of Pizon," one might very well imagine it to have been located in the jungles around Plantacion San Felipe, for in them grow not only teak and mahogany, the lordly cedar and mighty *ceiba*, a hundred other trees that are "pleasant to the sight" and good for shade, but also wild figs and sweet limes, vanilla, coffee and *cacao*, wild rubber and tobacco, almost every fruit and shrub that tropical man requires for his uses. A country of heats and languors, abundantly watered and aired by fragrant winds soft as a sigh, it could hardly be surpassed by the "first garden," even in the size and number of its snakes.

On its part, San Felipe might very well have vied, in its sheltered beauty, with that other "garden within a garden" that Solomon prepared for his love. Almost encircled by a giant loop of the river, it was ruled from end to end by a green velvet line of rubber, which broke here and there around great trees that had been spared to shade the *cacao* and *cafetals*; for unlike the neighboring plantations, which were all new clearings, San Felipe had been worked for coffee and tobacco by the old don from whom Oliver's company had purchased.

On a point midway of the loop, the sere thatched roofs of the store, *galeras*, and other work buildings, rose like cones of gold out of the diversified foliage of palms and bananas; the path

from the landing ran up through an orange grove, whose heavier incense drowned the fragrance of the flower garden that surrounded the house. Though the latter had lacked for years the tender culture of the old don's daughters, it still bloomed riotously; formed a proper setting for the golden Eve now entered therein after the manner above set forth.

By the time Consuelo returned carrying her *fiesta* wear and other belongings in a bundle on her head, Oliver had made ready a small *jacal* close to his own that had been used as an outdoor kitchen in the old don's time. But if he had realized—as he did during the next few days—how much they would be thrown together, it is doubtful whether she would ever have bestowed herself and possessions therein. As the *mayor domo* and his *enganchados* were out in the rubber from dawn till dark and the cookhouse women kept similar hours, the pair were, to all intents and purposes, walking the San Felipe garden alone.

They were not, however, unobserved. Omitting the nods and winks, bets and prophecies that were passing among the neighboring planters, tongues ran freely both in Oliver's own fields and several near-by villages. But in the face of these scandalous buzzings, it has to be set down that the first pair did not walk more circumspectly before the "Fall" than he and Consuelo during the first month of her service.

If no other testimony were forthcoming upon this point, that of the girl's mother would be more than sufficient. For when she would gain the shelter of the jungle on her way home after each visit to her daughter, she would throw up her hands with a gesture that could only imply: "What is the world coming to?" But as her questions concerning Consuelo's new estate were framed with great subtlety, her innocence remained undisturbed; Oliver was left free to mold it into the perfect pattern of tropical womanhood that was to bring confusion to Bolton and other scoffers.

First on the program came educa-

tion. After she had learned the Spanish alphabet, he wrote out, every morning, headings in fair round hand for her to copy at odd moments during the day. To broaden her understanding, he talked to her at meals of England and other countries; and while she sewed or ironed of evenings he would sit in the doorway and read selections from Don Quixote or translate, as best he could, from his English books.

It is doubtful, however, whether she gained anything by his labors. Coming of a race that had gotten along very nicely for a few hundred thousand years without the aid of letters or news of the outside world, her brain was not impressed by mere abstractions. In her heart of hearts it is to be feared that she set him down as the greatest of living liars, but outwardly she was docility itself, copied his pothooks and hangers with plodding care, accorded strict attention to the reading, and otherwise behaved with such serious respect that, in a glow of hope, he wrote home and told his mother all about it.

Though a religious devotee both by nature and in practice, that good lady had still enough woman left in her to be seriously disquieted by the pen picture of his pupil that concluded the letter.

She wrote, out of the fullness of knowledge:

The care and training of such a pretty young woman would be a sufficiently difficult task for her own mother—even amidst the restraining influences of civilization. I should advise you to return the girl to her home.

Whereby she drew upon herself fifteen closely written pages of fine indignation, one sentence of which illustrates the general tenor:

I should have thought that you, of all persons, would have been the last to have me recreant to the trust which has been thrust upon me in the person of this girl, or slow to utilize the opportunity it affords to rebuke the immorality of the white planters on this river.

So the pothooks, conversings, and reading went on; to tell the truth, without much harm. As aforesaid, they

walked uprightly, the innocence of each safeguarding that of the other; might have continued to do so for *quién sabe* knows how long—perhaps till stale usage confirmed the habit—if the serpent, in form of Saintenon, the bandit, had not suddenly broken into the San Felipe garden from beyond the fencing river.

As Saintenon had already shown a preference for white throats when they were to be had for the cutting, it fortunately happened that Oliver had gone downriver on the morning of the raid to buy *maíz* and *frijoles* at the little Mexican town of San Juan. Less luckily, he had taken all of his spare cash with him, for had more legitimate booty been forthcoming, it is doubtful whether Saintenon would have cumbered himself with a slip of a girl. In the absence of it—perhaps in despite—he carried Consuelo off, and were this a tale of romantic emprise instead of the spiritual record of a humdrum youth, her adventures with him were surely worth the telling. Something, too, might be made of Oliver's horror and sorrow, which were deep and sincere; less of the pursuit that was hopeless, as the jungle's vast green tangles favor always the hunted. Deprived of its incident, the tale narrows down to this—that, on the whole, the girl was not mistreated.

Born of a race of women who secured their husbands as often as not by the chance of war and were not too particular about the means so long as they got them, she bowed to fate from the first; within a week might have been seen pounding her captor's *camisa* on the stones of an *arroyo* while he smoked and looked on from the shade.

Had it not been for the needs of a profession that keeps one eternally upon the move, she would probably have settled quite contentedly with him in some jungle clearing. But when one of the said exigencies—in the form of a posse of *rurales*—finally compelled separation, and he tried to sell her twice in one day, first to a German trader, then to a sea captain whose vessel was loading mahogany at the river port, she rose in hot revolt. The Tehuana heart,

which is sound on the fundamentals of one husband—at a time—and many babies, would not brook such shame.

Giving him the slip by night, she secured passage upriver with Bolton, who had just returned by sea from a trip to Vera Cruz, and thus it came about that, coming in from the *cafetals* one evening a month or so after her disappearance, Oliver found her setting the supper table just as though nothing had happened.

"Why, Consuelo!"

He shouted it in his glad surprise, and, as she was always the little girl in his eyes that her years would have made her in England, he gathered her up in a brotherly hug while stuttering his welcomes.

There was, however, less of the sisterly in the dark look with which she measured him. Its deep quiescence and stealthy consideration were reflections from the continent of experience she had traversed—if not alone, at least without him. It was the same look that had caused Bolton to remark to his Tehuana housekeeper an hour before:

"It is all over with Oliver now."

"Si, were he of thy sort," the girl had answered. "Don Oliver is of priestly flesh. Still, as thou sayest, the girl is now a woman, and, if she have but the half of her mother in her, she would drag him out of a church."

But the look was far too subtle for Oliver's simple reading, and in answering his questions she was discretion itself.

"On an easier trail one would almost have called him kind," she concluded a narrative that displayed Saintenon in such lights that Oliver quite warmed to the rascal.

"Then I can forgive him," he generously decreed. "I almost hope that the *rurales* do not get him."

Though he had missed her, he had never realized how much till the crimson skirt resumed its flutterings about the table while he was eating supper. Even when she passed behind he kept it in the tail of his eye. With huge enjoyment he reopened Don Quixote after the dishes were put away, and though,

once or twice, he caught the soft stealth of her glance over the top of the book, he set it down to interest, and returned his broadest smile.

He was, however, destined to learn a little more of its meaning, and the first glimmerings of knowledge came from the splitting headache that laid him out on his *catre* the following evening. The wet cloth over his eyes prevented him from seeing her steal into the *jacal*. Indeed, first news of her presence came when two small cool hands lifted his head and began to knead and press his face and temple as it settled in her lap. Had he wished it, the movement was too deliciously soothing for him to protest, and, worn out by pain, he lay quietly until the spell of her fingers passed him into deep sleep.

When he awoke, hours later, the oil smoke that fouled the darkness told that the lamp had burned out. His head still lay in her warm lap, and her fingers rested upon his eyes just where they had ceased to move when she fell asleep with her back propped against the siding. At home his mother had rubbed away many a headache, and from the force of association, he thought, at first, it was she, and so lay till a soft sigh brought him sitting up, wide awake.

Even then he felt only gratitude for her pains, and not until she had retired to her own bed did he fall a prey to other feelings. Lying there, in the dark, he blushed as he recalled the situation; was desperately vexed when, next day, he could not dismiss it from his mind. At the most inopportune times, her soft sigh would recur in thought, and cover his large, mild face with the reds of utter confusion.

Had he but known it, he was even then in a bad way, and the next symptom worthy of record came to the surface when, in bending over to guide her pen to a better stroke at the writing lessons a week later, his cheek accidentally brushed her warm shoulder. The resultant chirography was their very worst, and his chagrin would have been utter and complete had he seen the smile with which she noted his confusion. If he could not see the end,

she certainly did, and of the multiplicity of small contacts, touching of hands on a dish, brushing each other in passing, the dozens that were bound to occur in their daily life, it is safe to presume that not all were accidental.

Whatever their nature, he grew so sensitive that soon the very flutter of her skirt behind him at table would bring him up, rigid in his seat, every nerve tense and taut. Undoubtedly the golden ideal of tropical womanhood was greatly endangered, but with that tenacity which so often goes with a gentle nature he hung on, determined to vindicate it in the eyes of their river world; and it was just at this time that the rains closed them in with a veil of falling water.

The rains came on the back of a "norther," a mighty wind that uprooted trees, unroofed *jacals*, lashed the jungle into a sea of green foam. In one night the river rose thirty feet, and swept around San Felipe, bearing on its yellow bosom acres of water lilies, miles of dead wood, occasional drowned beasts, the flotsam and jetsam of a thousand square miles of forest.

As his own *jacal* offered about the same resistance to the flying vapors as a bird cage, it was only natural that Oliver should seek the warmth and dryness that was to be found only by the stove in Consuelo's little kitchen, and he offered no objection when, coming in one night, he found that she had set his supper table there. With the dampness excluded by *sarapes* she had hung around the walls, he ate in comfort, and afterward sat by the stove quietly enjoying the picture she made under the gold of the lamp. Clad in a clean crimson skirt and spotless chemisette, she stood at the table ironing, of all occupations that which most expresses the quintessence of housewifery.

Both on that and other evenings, he absorbed more than the heat, for his senses fed, quite unconsciously, on the multitude of small movements, accents, expressions, that go to make up the subtle feminine presence. And it was so insidious. While his eyes would be

following the play of her small hands over the irons or dishes, the butterfly flutterings of her dark lashes above the red dusk of her cheeks, her lively tongue kept him so busy that he had no time to notice the damage. For she had her sex's knack at conversation, and would retail with flashes of wit and invariable humor the gossip of the river.

Often she shocked him by the absolute materiality of her viewpoint.

"Fine words," she commented, one night, on the florid protestations of a Cervantes lover, of whom Oliver had just been reading. "Fine words, señor, but wait till he gets her. Then 'twill be a clout on the head for every button lost off his shirt."

Looking at all things herself with the wide-open gaze of a primitive child, she sometimes snatched the scales of civilization away from his eyes, and gave him startling glimpses of naked truth; one of which left him breathless, it touched so closely upon his idea.

"What would I wish for?" She repeated his question at the close of a fairy-godmother story which he had freely rendered in Spanish. "What *should* a girl wish for but babies to lie in her bosom?"

The black thirst of her glance made his spirit as water within him, and, dropping his own eyes, he studied the stove. But his natural pertinacity would never allow him to stop till he had touched bottom in any argument, and presently he asked:

"You mean that you would like to be married? Have a husband and children all your own?"

"Marriage, señor?" The black thirst gave place to sudden wonder. "That is only for great folk. Where should an Indio gain the hundred *pesos* for *jefe* and priest? In any case 'twere folly to give it, for 'tis not from them one gets her children."

"But—without marriage the man is unbound," he objected. "He can desert the woman at will."

"And what of it?" She returned his question with one of her straight black glances. "Of what worth, señor, is a man that has to be bound? And the

woman has always her children. Ah, had I but one! Just one such as little Maria, the sweet *niña* of Señor Bolton! I would not change places with Carmen, the wife of *el gobernador* herself."

In the little thought he had given to it, marriage had always loomed as a rosy abstraction behind the veils of romance and religion; but, as it came bursting out of her, the eternal, deathless craving of the woman for her child, he gained for the first time in his dreamy life a vivid glimpse of the concrete relation. As he sat, staring at the wonderful transformation in the pretty face, which had bloomed in a moment into the maturity of passion, he was carried back in feeling thousands of years to the old, old time when the child knew only its mother, and the race traced back through the woman.

Under the brilliance of that illumination, he saw the cherished ideal of tropical womanhood receding to a vast distance. It would have vanished altogether had he not suddenly shut the eyes of his mind, and as he sat there, in mental darkness, the thinking idealist that was so strong in him had to fight with might and main to suppress that other, the sentient, feeling being whose every instinct had flamed at the vision.

"But—but—" Stammeringly he returned to the original argument. "There could be neither faith of man or woman. Nor continuance of love with the thing as thou sayest it."

"And wherefore not?" Without waiting for answer, she continued: "To man and woman love comes not once, but often. They who say other—lie! So long as they love, the man and the woman—good! Let them abide each with the other. But when the sweet is gone from the kisses, it is *nada*; let them part. I would kill her that came between me and my love. But after it dies—let her take him."

"But the children?" he gasped, shocked and confounded by logic that ignored the sophistries and conventions that governed his own life. "The children?"

"They will have her, their mother—and who has the better right?"

If he had thought of anything else to say, it must have remained unsaid for lack of breath for words. He could only think. Had she been a white girl, it would have been easy to dispose of herself and her logic with a single word—immoral! But not only had she set forth her views with all the innocence of perfect belief, but they had behind them all the force of racial custom; and from personal observation he knew that the world held no more loving spouses, better housekeepers, gentler mothers, than the Tehuana women.

Abandoning the argument for that evening, he retired, in some confusion, to bed—but not to rest. While he lay, listening to the swish and rattle of palms, the splash, and roar, and turmoil of the river and jungle, the idealist and the man fought within him, each asserting preëminent claims to his soul and body. Till he dropped at last into troubled sleep the battle raged—to begin again next morning, and continue thereafter every day. For wherever he was, at his writing, in the store, out in the fields, she went with him. Behind the veil of falling rain, she loomed always, holding out her golden youth, demanding the promise proper to his years.

It was the old contest between the man and his spirit that drove many a holy man to seek safety by flight to the sexless desert, and, as always, its fortunes constantly wavered; for, dreamer as he was, the idealist put up the fiercest kind of fight. On the days that he was in the ascendant, the lessons went on in the warm kitchen after supper, and did the battle go against him, he had usually strength enough left to force his reluctant flesh off to bed—where, if not drowned, its reluctant growlings were at least subdued by the roar of the rains.

But from each of these enforced abstinences, the flesh came back stronger than ever; was put by them in the finest kind of fettle for the deciding battle which came when, one evening, she tripped and fell forward, striking the stove.

His cry, "Art thou hurt, *chiquita*?" gathering her up in his arms, carried a

full confession, and, though she was not the least bit hurt, she made no attempt to avoid his embrace. Nay, she snuggled all the closer, and at the feel of the soft, warm body against his breast, his flesh—the omnipotent, unconquerable flesh—rose in furious revolt against its spiritual antagonist. One look at himself twinkling in the black depths of her eyes, and his mind went blank. He saw only them—and the red lips rising to meet his kisses.

In fact, it was not until, some time later, that she covered them with one hand, while she gently pushed away his head with the other, that the idealist succeeded in again making himself heard in the tumult of consciousness.

But when he did speak, it was with no uncertain sound.

"Now, you have done it," he reproached the wicked flesh. "A pretty mess you have gotten us into. What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing," the rebel answered.

"But you must," argued the counselor. "Is this the example we were to set upon this river?"

"Darn the river! I've got her, and I'm going to keep her."

"Then it will be on my terms."

The argument was here interrupted by Consuelo's soft whisper: "I knew from the first that thou didst love me. Foolish one to dally so long! Dost thou not know there is no escape from love?"

"And thee?" he asked, fondling her hair. "When——"

"From the moment I saw thee at the store window. I knew it not then—fully. But I soon learned. And now I am to be thy love—and such a love that I will be!—all thy days at San Felipe."

"And elsewhere—forever." It was the idealist with his terms. "To-morrow we will go downriver to the priest at San Juan."

Sitting up, she regarded him with astonishment.

"To the priest? At San Juan? For what?"

"To be married, of course."

Of all the surprises that she had dealt out to him in bewildering succession, that which she now offered was by all

means the greatest. For, with a vigorous shake of the head, she drew out of his arms.

"No, señor!"

"What?" Unable to believe his ears, he questioned. "You will not—marry me?"

"No, señor." Even more vigorously, she shook her head.

"But you would—live with me?"

"Si!" Her nod was even more emphatic. "But not to marry. Were we once tied by the priest, then the children would be thine, to take with thee to thy own *pais* when the time is met for thy return, or to place in a convent where they would grow beyond me, their Tehuana mother, as did the *niñas* of Señor Carleton."

"You think that I would do that?"

"So said Señor Carleton, but—he did."

"And you believe that I might desert you—my wife?"

Here the golden shoulders rose out of her chemisette in protest against his reproach.

"Be not angry at me for the truth. The *Inglese* returns always to his *pais*, and wert thou as fondly foolish as to take me with thee, a fine figure I should make with my black face and peon ways among the fair women of thy country. For the very shame of it, thou wouldst hate me." Covering his mouth with one hand, she concluded: "No, señor, I will be thy true mate, keep the house, love thee and our children; but when the time is met for the parting they must stay with me, their mother."

"Our children?" He started as it fell from her lips, was conscious of a curious stirring of feeling. But with it came a new sense of responsibility to set him again at his doubts. "But that would be wrong—for me."

"Then, señor, it can never be."

She had taken him at his word, yet somehow even the idealist felt it to be rather sour rejoicing. In offering marriage, he had not been altogether unconscious of a feeling of righteous condescension; and, deeply hurt both in his personal and racial pride, he arose and retired. His chagrin would have turned

to anger had he seen her amused smile behind his stiff back. Quite unconcerned, she resumed the ironing which had been broken off by her fall, and the soft laugh that punctuated a long period of meditation did not augur well for his peace.

Morning dawned on the idealist in full command once more, and though wounded pride, regret, pity for her and—deep down in consciousness—a sneaking hope, colored his morning reflections, Oliver was rather glad, on the whole, that the event had shaped as it did.

"Everything can now go on as before," he told himself, going about his work, and, with quite a glow of enthusiasm, he hoisted the golden ideal of tropical womanhood once more upon her perch.

But his philosophy vanished and feeling froze when, returning to the house for lunch, he found Consuelo tying up her bundle.

"I am to leave," she returned quiet answer to his question. "My mother was here this morning, and will have it that I settle with old Tomas, who has given her a pacing mule."

"But—but—" Words failed, and, ignoring the lunch on the table, he went out, and walked rapidly away into the jungle.

Until lost in the heart of its deep-green life, he held on, trying all the while to think, to get a grip on his conscious self. But he could only feel. Through the red confusion that paralyzed his mind, he felt with remarkable clearness the soft arms around his neck, the warm body against his own, the pressure of her moist, red lips.

During the hours that he paced the jungle paths, these were always with him—sometimes alone, again concurrently with vivid glimpses of her graceful presence fluttering in gold and crimson about his house. To-morrow it would be empty, and she—when, at last, he formed the thought, it brought to him for the first time in his life the barbed stings of jealousy.

Stricken with sudden fear that she

might be already gone, he started back home at a furious pace. Then, remembering that she would never leave without her wages, he turned again, and resumed his paces.

The rich jungle greens were, indeed, shot through with the rich lights of evening before he went back. While retracing the tangle of paths, the love calls of birds filled the soft evening air with sensuous melancholy. On the way he met a girl returning home to a down-river village, and at her saucy smile, challenging flash of black eyes, a vivid impulse leaped within him. He knew—then. Yet, by some curious reaction, the idealist once more asserted himself as he stepped into the hut.

His quiet wish, "May happiness go with thee," handing her the wages, caused her to glance quickly up in his face. But, reassured by the distress behind its red confusion, she answered: "And may it abide with thee," and so tripped gracefully away with her bundle poised on top of her head.

On the edge of the jungle she paused, waved her hand, then walked on—at, however, a slower pace. Sometimes turning aside to pick a flower, she strolled along at her leisure, and finally came to a stop in a wooded dell. Sitting upon her bundle, she arranged her flowers to her satisfaction, fixed one scarlet bud in her dark hair; then, leaning forward, she listened till a sudden swish and crackle of bushes brought her to her feet.

For her quiet confidence was more than justified by that which had transpired back at the plantation. Just as he had watched her come, like a rose blown in a wind, three months ago, Oliver had watched her go. The idealist was trying to tell him how very glad he was—and ought to be. But somehow, like a stifling blanket, the red confusion suddenly smothered him out. Till Consuelo passed from sight, he stood in a sort of coma. Then—of their own volition, it seemed to him—his feet picked him up and started down the path.

"I'll take a look in at the cookhouse," he heard himself saying.

But the feet carried him past it, and then it was that the idealist woke up and urged a last appeal.

"Don't do it! If you will only sleep on it a night, you'll be glad in the morning."

But the feet went on.

"Think of what Rolton, the other fellow will say! How they will laugh!"

As in a dream, he saw and heard the grins and laughter, and—did not care. In obedience to the impulse that possessed him, an instinct huge, amorphous, that had behind it the force of all time, he moved on—slowly, at first, his feet lifting against the lead of habit, then faster and faster, till, finally, he ran.

Blindly he ran, crashing through the brush at sharp turns with noise that carried to the distant glade.



CELIA

BEAUTY but came her way to be
More beautiful by far,
As night, advancing on the sea,
Is lighted by a star.

And she but followed beauty's way,
More beautiful to be,
As when the star, before the day,
Is taken by the sea.

WITTER BYNNER.



AND this," Hayward finished, imitating accurately inflection and gesture of the professional guide, "is the Medical Building, gift of Mrs. Ellen Hathorn, whose portrait adorns the entrance hall. To the left, embowered in trees——"

"Oh, hush!" cried the girl. "Be merciful, Brett! You sound like the man on the sight-seeing automobile. It isn't decent—without the megaphone."

"Well, anyhow"—he accepted her interruption with the flash of a smile, delightfully young, across his lean, brown face—"this is the Medical. Isn't it a peach? Look at these columns, Phyl!"

Phyllis Dent looked, and nodded her admiration.

"It's beautiful architecture," she agreed. "What's that red-brick cottage across the campus with the wide porch?"

"That's a frat house, the Phi Deltas!"

"And the religious-looking place over there?"

"That's the chapel. Want to go through it?"

She shook her head.

"If you don't mind, I'd rather stay out in the sunshine. What wonderful big trees these are, Brett!"

"Pretty decent, aren't they? Well, now you've seen it all, let's go somewhere and sit down. There's a place down by the river—are you tired?"

Phyllis stared reproachfully.

"Tired? After two hours of gadding? You don't know me! I'm good

for all day. Let's go down to the river, of course. It sounds good."

Hayward, with a reminiscent chuckle, turned down a shady path.

"This is Lovers' Lane—original title—can you stand for that?"

"What's the difference?" she said gayly; but he looked back over his shoulder in time to see her blush.

"After all," he remarked irrelevantly, "I'm just as glad."

"Of what?" she insisted.

"Of everything," he retorted mysteriously.

They came presently to the little river, and on its bank a rustic summer-house, empty and cool. Great willows swept trembling green fringes down around it. Between the treetops overhead were patches of warm blue sky. There was the breath of autumn about the place; but a gentle autumn not too far advanced.

"I guess this is bad!" said Hayward exultantly.

"Dear me!" objected Phyllis. "One would think you had made it." She ended with a little sigh of delight. "But it is delicious. Honestly, it reminds me of an illustrated song, you know. I feel as if you ought to be down on one knee kissing my hand, while some one, over at the side, sings something pathetic—'She Said Good Night, but She Meant Good-by.' How would that do? I ought to have on a pink frock and a floppy hat; you ought to be in white flannels. Can't you see the picture? By the time we've crossed to the window to say farewell, I'll be wearing a black

evening gown, and have tears in my eyes— Oh, stop, Brett! I didn't mean you to kiss it, really. Some one will see you!"

"I don't know who it'll be," protested Hayward, with a half-serious glance back the way they had come; but he released her hand. "This time of day there's no one around."

"Well, I don't care," murmured Phyllis, sitting down and laying parasol and purse upon the bench beside her. "I hate to have my hand kissed."

"It's a poor substitute, that's true."

She frowned at him for a second demurely.

"Do let's talk sense. How are you getting along here?"

"Like chain lightning," he replied easily. He came and sat down beside her, flinging his hat upon her parasol.

"You like it?"

"Yes; I like it. Work's interesting. Athletic instructor is what they call me; but coach comes nearer the mark. I'm going to turn out a ripping good football team this year. I've got one man that can punt sixty yards on his *off* days."

"Brett! You have!"

"That's the truth," he assured her earnestly. "Well—and, on the side, I'm getting my Master's next June. Now, what about you?"

The suddenness of the question startled the girl. She lifted wide, questioning eyes, flushing prettily, then tried to evade the issue with a laugh.

"Why, I told you all about me while we were having lunch. That was a delightful luncheon, by the way, Brett. You order so sympathetically."

"You told me you were going to Norton for a couple of weeks. Your note said *that*. By the way, what time is your train? Three?"

She nodded absently.

"It's one-thirty," he mused, returning his watch to its pocket. "A good hour yet before we need go back. You got in at eleven, didn't you? We'll have had four hours together."

"Almost a whole day."

"Almost!" he jeered. "What's a pitiful little four hours?"

"Isn't it better than nothing?"

"Other men can see you every night of the week." He crossed his legs, staring moodily at the tips of his shoes.

"Perhaps that's the reason I'm not half so glad to see them," she suggested whimsically.

Hayward turned with a quick impulse of tenderness.

"Do you mean that, Phyl?"

"I don't know," she murmured; "perhaps."

He looked at her in silence for a moment, then began to laugh.

"Same little ways—you haven't changed a particle."

"Have you?"

"Have I?" he repeated thoughtfully.

He settled to a consideration of the question, elbows on his knees, with the innate egoistic delight of the man-animal surveying himself in a woman's eyes. "Some ways, little girl, I've changed quite a bit. A man gets older overnight, somehow. Other ways I'm just the same—just the same. The biggest way that I can think of, I'm just the same. You know what I mean."

"I know," she acquiesced softly, "you still wear that horrid mustache."

His hand went instinctively to the slender, dark adornment of his upper lip, while a vindictive humor informed his glance.

"Just for that I've a good mind not to tell you. Behave, Phyl! I'm talking sense."

"I wish you'd shave it, like a Christian," she sighed; but she sobered obediently.

"Well?" he said, after a moment, to allow the flippant interruption to be forgotten. "I haven't changed. How about you?"

"I don't know," she said faintly.

Hayward leaned forward and took one of her white hands in both of his. After a dutiful wriggle, she let it lie there unprotesting.

"Listen here," he said impressively. "Why did you write me when you found that you'd have to stop over here to-day?"

Phyllis flung him an audacious smile.

"Because I thought you'd like to see me."

"Go on. What else?"

She added, with a trace of reluctance: "And because—why, because I thought I'd like to see you. Are you satisfied?"

"Not yet. You wouldn't have done it if you'd forgotten me?"

"I suppose not," revealing a sudden dimple.

"And if I'd forgotten you I wouldn't have cut an important engagement with prexy to meet your train—eh?"

"Oh, did you?" she cried delightedly.

"I did," he said, and held her hand tight.

The river murmured much the same comment to the willows that it had murmured on other occasions; a kind of throaty chuckle over the rocks.

After a little while, Hayward said slowly:

"You know you had me going some last summer, Phyl. I thought when I came out here this year that maybe I'd better forget you. I honestly tried to." He laughed at her face of aggrieved protest. "Why, you wouldn't have cared. There are lots of fellows you can whistle to heel without *me*. There's a whole bunch that sits up on its hind legs, and begs, and eats out of your hand, and plays dead, any old time you want it to."

"As bad as that?" she sighed.

"Just that bad. I thought I was going to cut loose, and—well, here I am."

He smoothed the fingers of the hand he held caressingly.

"Do you know you've been in the back of my head all the time? I've thought I was enjoying life; but there's been a hole in it. How do I know? Because this morning when you got off that train you stepped in and filled it. I've been wanting you like the dickens, and I didn't know it. Phyl, I——"

"Don't say it!" she cried hurriedly. "I won't listen."

"How do you know what I was going to say?" he demanded.

She reddened to the wave of bright brown hair above her forehead.

"Whatever it was, don't say it."

"Well, that was it," he said cryptically. He repossessed himself of the hand she had snatched away. "How can I help it?"

"Do you want to?" she parried.

The river and the willows naturally found nothing new or piquant in the conversation.

"I wish you didn't have to go so beastly soon," Hayward observed presently, with a frown. "What's a measly little four hours!"

"I wish I didn't, too," she sighed regretfully. "What time is it, Brett?"

He snapped open his watch.

"Two-fifteen. Good Lord! The old boy with the scythe is certainly busy. Just fifteen minutes more. We don't want to waste it. See here, Phyllis, when am I going to see you again? You'll be in Norton how long?"

"Two weeks—but after that I may go East with Aunt Nora."

"Humph! That knocks my chances in the head. If I can get off early enough at Christmas, I'll stop over on my way home."

Phyllis' eyes grew warm.

"Oh, do! I wish you would."

"You'd be glad to see me?"

"If you're good."

"Impossible! And between times you won't forget me?"

"Maybe not."

"Say!" he said earnestly. "It's been great seeing you even for this little while—but Lord, I wish it were longer! I don't believe you know, Phyl, how much it means to me. Honestly, I—oh, well, what's the use? You know what I want to tell you. Don't you?"

"Maybe I do," she admitted softly.

"Don't you?" he insisted jealously.

"Ye-es. What time is it, Brett?"

"You're bored!" resentfully.

"No, you silly boy; but I can't miss my train."

"Then I guess we'd better go," he said reluctantly, getting to his feet. "We'll be twenty minutes getting into town, and you want to get your suit case—you haven't lost the check?"

Phyllis displayed it convincingly.

"All right, come on, then." But he lingered a minute in the doorway, look-

ing at her tenderly, at her pretty, flushed face and the frank eyes beneath the black hat, with its sweeping owls' wings. "Say you hate to go, Phyl."

"Oh, I do!"

"Are you happy?"

"Awf'ly," with a delicious flush.

"But you wouldn't let me tell you that I——"

"You can write it," she pleaded. "Please, Brett. I'll miss my train."

She sprang down the summerhouse steps and into the path before him. Her cool-looking pongee frock fluttered between the trees.

On the car going into town he grew impressive, sitting, to all appearances, straight and cool beside her, but speaking low and with an eager hush to his voice.

"You'll write soon? To-morrow?"

"If I possibly can," she promised.

"You can if you want to. I'll write you to-night. There are a dozen things I wanted to tell you that we haven't had time for. Good heavens! This howdy-do-and-good-by business is the limit! I wanted to hear about Brooks."

"Why, there's nothing to tell," she evaded. "We parted forever last week, as usual." From the tail of her eye she glimpsed Hayward's eager face.

"That's what I wanted to hear," he laughed briefly. "Poor old Brooks! Well, you won't forget to write?"

"At the earliest," she assured him, with a smile.

Having left the car, and midway to the depot, he made his last request.

"Honestly, Phyl, it's been a chip of heaven to-day. Don't put off writing. I hate like the deuce to see you go. I didn't know how badly I wanted you."

"Oh, *didn't* you!" Surprised displeasure sounded in her tone.

"Well, of course, I knew I *did* want you, but not how badly. Now, don't go and spoil it all by misunderstanding—look out for that fence—it's fresh paint! I'm going to see you at Christmas if it takes my last dollar. I wish I could set the darned clock back. I tell you I'm going to miss you more than ever now. You're not going to forget me, little girl?"

"Can't you trust me?" she said reprovingly.

"Um! Wait here," he ordered, stopping in the shade of the depot, "and I'll get your suit case. Give me the check? What about your ticket?"

"I have it," said Phyllis. She smiled up beautifully into his grimly tender eyes.

After a little while he came back to her, carrying the suit case, and set it down at her feet. It was heavy.

"Your train's an hour late," he said gleefully.

"Good gracious!" cried Phyllis in dismay. She explained at once. "It's so dreadful, you know, to have made up your mind to it, and then—of course I hate to go; but since I've *got* to, why, I'd rather get it over with."

"An hour more looks pretty good to me." Hayward regarded her reproachfully.

"Oh, I don't mean that I'm not glad, too," said Phyllis. She smiled brightly.

"Shall we sit down here?"

It was the shady side of the pretty Elizabethan station, and the bench looked reasonably inviting. Hayward sat down, pushing his hat to the back of his head.

"I'm just thinking," he suggested, "shall we stay here, or do you want to go up the street to the moving-picture show?"

"Wouldn't we have to check my suit case again?"

"That's all right."

"Oh, let's just stay here," said Phyllis. She pulled off her gloves and rolled them together. "Let's just sit here and talk. You can tell me about your football squad. What sort of a quarter have you got?"

That allayed somewhat the slackness of the situation, for slack it undoubtedly was. To be keyed up for a fond farewell on the striking of the clock, and to have to delay that farewell until the clock has counted sixty and struck again, is rather an awkward process. Nothing goes stale so quickly as a fond farewell delayed. So Hayward plunged headforemost into a description of the raw material he was shaping for the

season, and Phyllis helped him with interested questioning.

Nevertheless, she was so far conscious of the passage of time that she broke off in the middle of a sentence when Hayward reached for his watch. Her eyebrows arched to a question.

"Ten minutes of four," he said slowly.

He hesitated a moment.

"Phyl, you won't forget what we were talking about a while ago? And for the Lord's sake, if that fool, Brooks, bobs up again, as I don't doubt he will, flatten him out finally, won't you? I can't feel satisfied knowing that an ass who won't take no for an answer is forever at your elbow. Propinquity means such a darned lot," he added apologetically.

Phyllis looked hurt, and said nothing.

"It's pretty nearly time for you to go now," he continued. "In a quarter of an hour you'll be on the way again, and there will be a big hole in this part of the world for me."

"You'll see me at Christmas," Phyllis reminded him.

"Christmas," growled Hayward gloomily, "is a long way off. Guess we'd better go round in front. Is this all you have to look after?"

Phyllis, smoothing her hair with little careful touches, nodded, and smiled.

"That's all—parasol and—where's my purse? Yes; this is everything."

They went around to the front of the depot, where one or two people were standing aimlessly about, waiting. As Hayward set the suit case down, a young man came out of the office and erased the topmost line on the bulletin board. In its place he scrawled a languid word or two.

Phyllis read it aloud with a gasp.

"Number—three—going north—two hours late! Brett!"

Hayward was bowing to a man across the way. When he turned to look, his jaw fell. He said at last, with much originality:

"Two hours late! Humph! Too bad! I mean I'm afraid you'll be very tired." He forced a smile.

"Do you mean that for a joke?" demanded Phyllis.

They stood there a moment in silence.

"Well!" said Hayward, with a magnificent cheerfulness. "We'll check this bloomin' suit case and go to the picture show, eh? We don't want to stay around here."

"Oh, no!" said Phyllis, with an irrepressible shudder.

While he was gone, she calmly applied a diminutive powder puff drawn from her vanity box, and peered at herself in a tiny mirror. She began to feel ruffled.

The picture show was a small, dark room, very warm, with the flickering life of the vitagraph at the farther end. There was "The Cowboy and the Schoolma'am," "Trouble With the Stenographer," "The Gambler," and "The Assassination of the Duke of Guise." Between the Gambler and the Duke of Guise, a thin, unpleasant, feminine voice sang "What's the Use of Moonlight When There's No One Round To Love"; and on the screen appeared successive pictures of a man and a girl in various sentimental attitudes.

Phyllis bit her lip to keep back hysterical laughter when one scene showed a river and a summerhouse among the trees. The girl of the picture wore a pink dress, and the man was kissing her hand.

Hayward grinned and scowled in the dark.

"What did I tell you?" murmured Phyllis, in a small, strangled voice.

When they came out into the street it was half-past four.

"Plenty of time to get an ice," said Hayward lightly.

He led the way to a cool, clean-looking tea room near the station; and, with the aid of the mirror beside their table, Phyllis tried to restore the morning's freshness. It had been so warm in the picture show that her straight little nose shone, and her hair, loosened by putting her hat off and on, hung in slender wisps about her tired face. She applied the inevitable powder puff under cover of a handkerchief.

"Do I look very dreadful?" she asked resignedly.

"You look fine," said Hayward promptly; but the mirror said otherwise.

Phyllis sighed. There is something peculiarly discomfiting in feeling oneself grow fagged and dusty before the eyes of a worshiper.

She swallowed her ice hastily when it came, for fear of delay.

"Isn't it time to go back?" she asked, twice at least. "We don't want to miss it."

"That would be a picnic," Hayward grinned.

"I'm glad you think so." Phyllis controlled herself, and managed a spiritless smile. "I simply *can't* miss it."

"You're bored to death," he said reproachfully.

"Oh, it isn't that!" They were on the way back to the depot now. "You mustn't think that, Brett. I've had a perfectly lovely time. It's just that not *knowing* makes me nervous—you know I've had a good time. But it's dreadful to be taking up your whole day like this."

"You couldn't please me better," said Hayward loyally, and mopped his face with his handkerchief.

It occurred to Phyllis with a little tired feeling of distaste that his face was shiny, too; and that his collar was wilting a little. Certainly he had said the same things over a good many times in the course of the afternoon, and his laugh began to grate on her nerves. She pulled herself together sharply.

"Anyhow," Hayward was saying, "we've had a bully day."

"We certainly have," Phyllis echoed perfunctorily.

They were almost at the station. He quickened to a gallant warmth.

"You won't forget to write?"

"I'll try not," said Phyllis, with a weary smile.

"I'll go have a look at that bulletin, though I reckon it's all right this time," he assured her at the waiting-room door.

Phyllis sat down, and waited.

When Hayward came back presently, she looked up with an effort. "Well?"

"Two hours and a half!" he announced.

"What time will that make it?" she asked, with the calm of despair.

"Half-past five," said Hayward.

Phyllis laughed hysterically, and bit her lip to keep back the tears.

Ten minutes went by like ten lean years, dotted with monosyllables. At the end of the ten, Hayward looked at his watch, and got to his feet with resolution.

"Come out and walk on the platform," he begged. "This is deadly."

So they went out, and walked up and down upon the platform. A good many other people were there, and Phyllis resented wearily their interested glances. She tried to talk, to fill up the stupid silence, but her feet dragged on the boards, her head had begun to ache, and when she found herself saying dully: "Well, for pity's sake!" the third time, in answer to some narrative of Hayward's, she stopped talking, and directed her entire attention to the treadmill.

"What time is it?" she asked when it seemed that one moment longer would spell a century.

"Five-fifteen," said Hayward, looking at his watch. He sounded disappointed, somehow. "Shall we sit down? Are you tired?"

"No; let's walk; one's no worse than the other. I mean," said Phyllis hastily, "I like the exercise."

"You look tired to death," he commented sympathetically.

"There's smut on your nose," she said coldly. "Better wipe it off."

Hayward accepted the advice without any excessive display of gratitude.

"I'm a little beast," she repented.

"Oh, no, you're not. You're a dear little girl. Do you remember what I said in the summerhouse?"

Phyllis stumbled and recovered herself, with a naughty word under her breath.

"Was that yesterday or last week, or possibly?"—with a wicked grin—"last summer?"

"I'm sorry," he said stiffly.

"Don't be silly," she retorted crossly. "You're not responsible for the old train."

There was a little stir in the waiting group.

"It's coming!" cried Hayward. "Good heavens! I'm forgetting your suit case."

He came back just before the train roared in.

"Well," he said longingly, as he helped Phyllis aboard, surrendering the suit case to an obsequious porter, "it's been great to see you again, little girl! Good-by. Take care of yourself—and don't forget to write!"

The train pulled out, and slid on over the shining rails with a shriek of derision, or so it seemed to Phyllis, whose last effort at a farewell from the car window resulted only in a feeble wave of one grimy little hand as her tired body collapsed against the virulent green plush of the car seat.

Slowly and with fumbling fingers she removed her hat.

"Thank Heaven I didn't let him say anything—much. Ugh! Seven solid hours! I'm a wreck—my face must have stiffened into a smile. I never dreamed that he could be so tiresome! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What a blessed escape! And to think I really half believed—"

Into which rambling and thoroughly feminine consideration of circumstances there entered a voice accompanied by a young man of reasonable comeliness, who sat down beside the lady like the spider and Miss Muffet.

"Well," said the voice, "this is luck!" And Phyllis jumped.

"Jim Brooks!" she gasped. "Where did you—"

"Going to Norton," said Mr. Brooks calmly. He added, with almost possessive frankness: "You look clean done up. What have you been doing to yourself?"

"I changed at University Junction," said Phyllis meekly; "and the train was almost three hours late."

Mr. Brooks emitted a distressed whistle.

"Poor little kiddie!" he observed tenderly. "No wonder her little face is shiny, and her hair is mussed. Here! I'll fix you."

He rang for a porter.

"A pillow," he said, "and a seltzer lemonade with plenty of ice. Beat it, John!"

John beat it, his mulatto paw closing firmly upon a sufficient reason for haste.

When the long, cool drink and the pillow had been obtained, Phyllis drew her first free breath. Something of a renewed interest in life came back to her languid eyes.

"Oh, Jim! You are a comfort!" she said childishly, and fished the cherry from her glass. "You're awfully good to me."

Mr. Brooks tucked the pillow closer behind her, and pushed a suit case beneath her feet. Then he lowered the shade to just the right angle for tired glances.

"Give me a chance," he said significantly, his eyes hungry. "This isn't a marker—just give me a chance."

And Phyllis, for the first time in her history, failed to meet his plea with mocking. Her own eyes grew thoughtful.

"I'm mighty glad," said Mr. Brooks, "that you took it into your head to change at the Junction to-day. Fate's a lady."

Phyllis nodded, and smiled inscrutably. Her look rested with a new and growing warmth upon Mr. Brooks' expressive features. All at once, and without the slightest warning, her pretty mouth quivered, and her eyes misted.

"Oh, Jim!" she whispered brokenly. "I think I will."

But before he could grasp more than vaguely the incredible fact of her surrender, and before his yearning hand, stretched instantly and recklessly forth, could more than touch her own, she was pink-checked, but calm.

"Only Fate's not a lady, Jim," said Phyllis. "She's generally another man."

ADVENTURINGS *in the* PSYCHICAL



XI.—SUGGESTION AND EDUCATION

IT is a commonplace of modern educational theory that the more interesting a subject is made to a child, the more readily will he study it, and the more easily and thoroughly comprehend it; and the best teachers have long proceeded on this sound principle. But to most children their books and lessons remain unspeakably tedious. They study because they have to, they learn by rote rather than by any real application of their powers of thinking, and they forget what they have learned with incomparably greater facility than they displayed in acquiring it. When their school days are at an end, and they enter on the serious business of life, they are in too many cases far less well equipped for its duties and responsibilities than society has a right to expect.

As a natural consequence, not a few able critics, men preëminently qualified to speak with authority, have vigorously condemned the present school system. "Our common schools," says President Eliot, "have failed signally to cultivate general intelligence."

And Professor Hinsdale, the well-known educator, declares:

"The public school is the panacea in which we Americans have been putting our trust, and we are now waking up to the fact that it is not doing the work that we have confidently expected it to do."

Undoubtedly the school system has many serious defects; but the trouble is

more deeply rooted. It is grounded in the circumstance that the process of education does not begin where and when it should—in the home, and long before the child has reached "school age."

There is, most assuredly, more fact than fancy in the statement attributed to an old philosopher, who, when asked to undertake the education of a child of three, refused, saying:

"I cannot do it. You have brought him to me too late."

Educational theorists have been accustomed to scoff at the principle involved in this statement, their idea being that the great danger lies in beginning to educate a child too soon. They would let his mind lie fallow during the first years of life; would let him run wild like a young colt. Some even advocate postponing the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic—the elements of education—until the child is ten years old.

Unfortunately for the soundness of this policy of neglect, it is now becoming well understood, on the part, at all events, of psychological investigators, that it is humanly impossible to let the mind of a child lie fallow. For the child is essentially a thinking animal, and from the day he first takes note of his surroundings he begins to think—to observe, to draw inferences, to arrive at conclusions, and to give expression to them.

If he is left to himself—or if, as is

so often the case, his parents give him information and assistance in a wholly perfunctory fashion—he is certain to observe inaccurately and to make many erroneous inferences, acquiring thereby wrong "thought habits," which the education of later years may never be able entirely to overcome. In fact, the chances are that the mentally neglected child, no matter how good his after schooling, will grow up not merely deficient in intellectual power, but also lacking in that grasp of principles which will alone enable him to solve life's problems properly.

This is what the old philosopher had in mind when he asserted that three was too late an age to begin a child's education; and this, to a large extent, is why the public school fails to realize the ideals at which it aims. Its pupils usually come to it without the indispensable preliminary home training.

There is another great reason for beginning the education of a child long before he goes to school. This is found in the fact that recent research has made it certain that everything the child sees and hears leaves a more or less profound impression, is consciously or subconsciously remembered by him, and may even exercise a determining influence upon the whole course of his life.

Similarly, I believe, the absorbing interest displayed by all men of genius in the pursuits for which they become famous may often be traced to some initial stimulus given them by impressions of their early childhood. On the other hand, early impressions may retard and check rather than stimulate intellectual activity, as is shown by a singular case which recently came to my knowledge.

It is the case of a young man who manifested an unconquerable and almost hysterical repugnance to engage in business. He was not lazy, but, on the contrary, was energetic and full of ambition. Despite this, the mere thought of entering an office and buckling down to work seemed almost to unbalance him.

His parents consulted a physician,

who, by tactful questioning, discovered that the secret of his repugnance to business was rooted in a deeper dislike and inaptitude for arithmetic. Further questioning finally elicited the explanation of this second dislike. When he was a child, the young man had had as his first teacher a tutor who looked upon his own profession as a drudgery. He was harsh and unfair to his little pupil, who soon detested him. As he grew older, the boy gradually and subconsciously confused the object of his hatred with the subject chiefly taught by him; whence arose his dislike for arithmetic and the subsequent inability to apply himself to business.

Now, the reason impressions of childhood have such dynamic force for good or for ill, is because childhood is the period of life when the human being is most suggestible. A child will accept any suggestion you give him, if you are skillful enough not to arouse in him the spirit of doubt or opposition. This has been demonstrated experimentally time and again; and sometimes by experiments which clearly indicate the handicap imposed on children who enter school without having had preliminary home training in the use of their faculties.

Suggestion, it should always be remembered, is no mysterious or uncanny force, operable only under exceptional conditions, as so many people seem to think. It is one of the simplest and most readily utilized of forces, although one of the most powerful. By suggestion is meant nothing more than the intrusion of an idea into the mind with such skill that it dominates and, for the moment, disarms or excludes all other ideas which might prevent its realization. For educational purposes it may be applied in many ways—as, for example, through the words of the instructor, his conduct, his attitude, and the proper arrangement of his pupil's environment.

This last is of the utmost importance because of the fact to which reference has already been made—the effect produced on the mind by everything that a child sees and hears. Because of the

suggestive force of one's surroundings, the most talented child in the world, no matter how bright he may naturally be, or how conscientious and able the training to which his parents subject him, may be dulled and ruined by a faulty environment. When, on the other hand, the training begins soon enough, and is supplemented by wise management of the environment, the intellectual capacity that may be developed in any child of normal mentality is really amazing.

I have in mind as I write the experience of a friend, one of America's leading psychologists, who, at the time of the birth of his only son, determined to put into practice the principles above outlined. He believed that education should begin with the first unfolding of a child's faculties, and that this would not necessarily involve any overstrain, because, he contended, every one possesses a reserve fund of "latent energy," which he may be habituated to use to his great advantage.

Acting on this belief, when his son, at about eighteen months, uttered his first childish words, he took him in hand and began what would seem a rigorous course of mental discipline. Daily, sometimes for an hour or more, he gave him lessons in speaking, spelling, and reading, using for the purpose a box of alphabet blocks. The result was that by the time the little fellow was two and a half he had learned simultaneously to talk, spell, and read, and had developed a phenomenal desire for knowledge. All children are naturally inquisitive; but as a rule their interest is scattered and not long sustained, and they are not at all concerned with serious subjects or matters that involve any prolonged concentration. This boy, on the contrary, even as a child of three, four, and five, busied himself in actual study.

To-day, in his thirteenth year, he is a veritable prodigy of learning. He could give—and indeed has given—many a college professor a hard rub in mathematics. Differential and integral calculus have no terrors for him. Analytical geometry is as simple to him as elementary arithmetic is to other boys of his age. He has even ventured into

speculative mathematics, writing a treatise on the fourth dimension, which by its originality has excited the wondering admiration of mathematical savants.

He is well advanced in the study of history, government, logic, astronomy, geography, the classics, and foreign languages. He has invented a universal language which, he insists, is free from the defects that critics find in Esperanto; he has undertaken a reformation of the calendar, and has mapped out the heavens according to a novel system of his own.

His father believes that his wonderful accomplishments—which abundantly entitle him, young as he is, to be rated as a "man of genius"—are to be accounted for not on the ground that he possesses natural capacities superior to other children, but by reason of his having been trained from infancy to use his mental faculties correctly and to draw habitually on his store of latent energy. He also lays stress, and rightly, on the intellectual stimulus his boy received through the special environment with which he surrounded him. There can be no question, for instance, that his rapid progress in the acquisition of knowledge is largely due to the suggestive influence of the furnishings of his bedroom.

While he was still an infant, his parents set apart for him a bright, cheery, well-lighted room. They chose a quiet design for the wall paper, and hung about the room a few attractive pictures of a type restful and pleasing to the eye, and at the same time making a strong appeal to the child's curiosity. Opposite his bed, situated so that it would be the first object to meet his eyes when he awoke in the morning, and the last he saw as he fell asleep, a small bookcase was placed, containing not merely the ordinary books of childhood, but also books of serious interest. Toys having a scientific basis were also placed in the room, which thus became, without the little fellow suspecting his parents' purpose, a sort of educational museum, inspiring him with an ardent desire to learn all he could.

To the silent but most efficacious suggestions of the environment so cleverly constructed, his father added oral suggestion along lines which every parent might profitably imitate, particularly when it is a question of educating a child in some subject in which he is backward.

At present, as was said, this remarkable boy excels in mathematics. There was a time when no subject could possibly have been more distasteful to him, and he seemed totally unable to grasp its first principles. He could not work out the simplest sums in addition, subtraction, division, or multiplication.

His father, discovering this, did not insist upon his forthwith applying himself to the study of arithmetic. Instead, he quietly purchased a box of dominoes, with which he invented games requiring more or less knowledge of the fundamental arithmetical processes. Every evening he would play these games with his son, and at the same time, without indicating his purpose, he placed mathematical textbooks in the boy's bookcase. In his presence, too, he discussed questions involving the application of mathematical principles in the affairs of everyday life.

This method, which was wholly one of "indirect suggestion," proved so effectual that the boy in a very short time took up the study of mathematics voluntarily, and thenceforward pursued it with the greatest enthusiasm and ease.

Such a result could never have been secured by the method of coercion commonly adopted by parents in spurring their children to the study of subjects in which they happen to be deficient.

Of course, there will be those who object that, without coercion, without obliging the child to do that which he does not like to do, he will grow up deficient in appreciation and exercise of the great virtue of self-control. Or, as the late Professor Gordy used to say, the important thing in education is not to stimulate the interest of the child, but to discipline his will. "A man who can only do what interests him is not half a man."

But here, again, the parent may safely rely on suggestion to develop this important phase of his child's character, even while educating him in accordance with the principles of the method of interest. Let him show himself a man of determination and strength of will, let him set before the child a constant example of self-control, and he need not fear that his little one will grow up a flabby, moral weakling.

There is no subject in the educational curriculum in which the parent cannot ably second the efforts of the teacher through the skillful employment of suggestion to waken the child's interest and set him making use of the hidden energies of his larger self. He may even do what educators have declared impossible—induce the child to study a subject for sheer love of it. To quote again from Professor Gordy:

"A child may make his own multiplication table because he likes to do it. In that case his conduct grows out of an immediate interest in his work. But when he learns the table by heart, he does it because the teacher requires it. Here, again, he acts from an immediate interest, but not from one growing out of what he does. He wishes, it may be, to please the teacher, or to get a good mark, or to avoid punishment. But no amount of pedagogical skill can bring it to pass that his interest shall so grow out of the work to be done that if the child were capable of analyzing his emotions he would say he did it because he liked it."

The development through suggestion of the mathematical prodigy just described sufficiently refutes such a sweeping statement; and what one parent has done any parent can do. He may not be able, perhaps, to get at the hidden energies of his child to so remarkable an extent, but he will have the satisfaction of seeing him progress more rapidly and easily than would be possible by any other method of instruction, and may in the end be rewarded by seeing him develop into a true man of genius.

The one thing needful is to turn the

child's thoughts, by slow degrees and without his perceiving the purpose, in the direction of the study you wish him to undertake; to introduce him to it by the playing of appropriate games; frequently to drop hints in his presence of its intrinsic interest and practical value; and imperceptibly to heighten his interest in the subject itself rather than in the games illustrating it.

To do this successfully requires considerable tact and patience. It also requires that the parent shall himself be genuinely interested in whatever he is trying to teach his child. A child's eyes are marvelously keen, his hearing exceedingly acute. The least insincere act or word is noted by him instantly, and will arouse the contrariant ideas which it is the province of suggestion to allay and expel.

This, it may be observed in passing, is why many teachers fail to get good results with their pupils. As Professor M. W. Keatinge, of Oxford University, says:

"No device of teaching or of manner, no reserve of information or of sympathy, will promote suggestion unless the idea that is to be suggested is first vividly imagined and keenly felt by the teacher."

And, as a hearer of one of Lord Acton's famous lectures on history declared:

"There was a magnetic quality in the tones of his voice, and a light in his eye that compelled obedience from the mind. Never before had a young man come into the presence of such intensity of conviction as was shown by every word Lord Acton spoke. It took possession of his whole being, and seemed to unfold it in its own burning flame. More than all else, it was, perhaps, this conviction that gave to Lord Acton's lectures their amazing force and vitality."

Every parent may be a Lord Acton to his child if only he cultivates sincerity of conviction, seriousness and earnestness of purpose, and the faculty of enthusiastic appeal.

If, for example, you have invented games intended to quicken your child's interest in the subject of geography,

you must enter into these games with him in a spirit of real enjoyment; otherwise his own interest will flag, he will tire of the sport, and the great object you have in view will be defeated.

"Come, now," you say to him, "let us see which of us can get first on the map to the great city of London, the city which all travelers visit when they journey across the sea. It is a fine city, my boy, a fine, big city, but a very foggy city. Sometimes the fog is so thick that— What! You have found it already? I must look sharper next time."

And so you go on, laughing and chatting, for half an hour or more, while your boy's merry laughter rings with yours through the room; and always you are bringing him nearer to the point where, with real enthusiasm, he will begin to study geography not for the pleasure of the game, but for its own sake and for the information it will give him.

Among the most difficult yet most essential things to teach a child are the elements of sound reasoning. As was pointed out in explaining why home training is so necessary a preliminary to schoolroom education, unless a child is taught how to think, he is sure to think incorrectly—to acquire wrong thought habits which may persist throughout life, causing him to form bad judgments with respect to many things not only vital to his own welfare and happiness, but important to the welfare of society.

His training in the principles of correct thinking—in accurate observation, the art of analysis and synthesis, and the drawing of sound inferences—should therefore begin at an early age; certainly not long after he starts to talk. And no better beginning can be made than with a box of alphabet blocks, with which the parent forms simple word combinations, while he utters the name of the object they represent, and, if possible, points to it with his hand.

By gradually altering and enlarging these combinations—by, for instance, transposing the blocks that present the

words "rat" and "tar," or changing "bar" into "bare"—the child will ultimately obtain keen insight into, and grasp of, the principles of analysis and synthesis, and will also receive an excellent drilling in the processes of observation and inference.

But more important than any mechanical device is the suggestive influence to which he should be subjected by the example of his parents. When they are with him they should carefully guard against making any loose or incorrect statements, against passing "snap" judgments on anybody or anything, against all faultiness in reasoning.

It is by growing up in an atmosphere of true reason, of real rationality, that the child is most likely to develop into a really rational being himself, and to think and behave as a really rational being should.

There is still another way in which parents may advantageously utilize suggestion in the home training of their children.

As has been shown in a previous article, when a person is hypnotized he obeys, with unresisting passivity, the commands of the hypnotist. This is because, in the hypnotic trance, his will and, to a large extent, his reasoning powers are in abeyance, and he is unable to oppose contrariant ideas to the ideas suggested to him. On the other hand, his subconsciousness remains alert, receives the hypnotist's suggestions, and, carrying them into execution, is often able to impart new strength to the upper consciousness and new vigor to the bodily organism. In this way many cases of disease—mental, physical, and moral—have been affected, and the intellect and character of the hypnotized person strengthened.

While it is neither necessary nor desirable to employ hypnotism in the training of children, except where there is urgent need of some reformatory action, it has been found that there is a state akin to the hypnotic trance in which suggestion may be helpfully employed. This is the state of natural sleep.

Says Doctor John D. Quackenbos, a

New York physician who has for years practiced suggestive therapeutics with much success:

"Every mother in the land can make her children what she wishes them to be provided she is a woman of high moral principle, gentle and patient, apprehensive of the power of transliminal—subconscious—appeal, possessed of courage to apply it with intelligent persistence, and having ardent faith in its effectiveness. She who is thus potent in the designed or undesigned exploitation of ennobling impulses is doubly qualified to reinforce the invisible authority of the higher self by direct appeal to the sleeping child.

"Let her find a favorable opportunity when the child is asleep for the night, remembering that there is no difference as regards suggestibility between natural sleep and the so-called hypnotic trance; let her take her place by the bedside, and begin in a low, firm voice, first to assure that the sleep will not be interrupted, and then to rehearse the appropriate suggestions. This should be repeated every third or fourth night until the desired trend is given permanently to the mental and moral motives. In educational work, the treatment may be persisted in for months. No difficulty will be encountered in thus creating a desire for knowledge and rendering its acquisition facile and rapid."

It goes without saying that such a program for home training as that which I have outlined means that parents would be obliged to devote considerably more time to their children than is usually the case at present. But they would find that it was time spent to great profit, not simply to the children, but to themselves; for suggestion, however applied, whether "directly" or "indirectly," works two ways, affecting both those who receive the suggested ideas and those who impart them. Besides which, there can be no doubt that, unless parents do give some such training to their children before and during their school years, the indictment brought against the public-school system, as mentioned at the outset of this article, must inevitably remain valid.



DROPPING ANCHOR

By Frank Condon

IT is now a well-known fact, from East Orange to Oyster Bay, that the modern bohemian is a direct descendant of the old, whiskered Greek god of cellar restaurants, shredded cheese, and wine stains. The race is divided into three sections, the first two having no money whatever. In looking through the registry book of the third subdivision, there was a time when your inquiring eye would come across the names of Rosamond Emeline Turner and Wallace Hunnewell, and you would look up with a reminiscent gleam and murmur: "Well, well! Many's the time I ran across them in the dear, dead days."

Things have changed since Rosamond and Wallace ceased paying nineteen dollars for two dollars' worth of food. The two-story taxpayer on Forty-third Street has given way before the iron hand of the house wrecker, and any one of ten elevators will rush you up to the new twentieth floor. Another million electric lamps have blossomed along the fringes of the Main Stem; the one-legged newsboy on the corner of Broadway has died, and in his stead is one with no legs at all. Nothing has been subtracted from the old whirligig, but many things have been added, and of these Wallace and Rosamond know such a pathetic little that one wonders at their combined and colossal ignorance, and feels torn by a desire to tell them of the new gold pillars in the Café de Noir, and the changed price of wine.

And why is this?

Hearken unto the plaint of the Third Mariner, who once frivoleed with Rosamond and Wallace, and finally went

away unsuspecting, only to return and find their footmarks—but not them.

In the days before Halley's Comet, Wallace Hunnewell was a confirmed bohemian of the best type; so was Rosamond Emeline Turner. Their paths were separate, but frequently they noticed each other, and in an indifferent manner they approved of each other's continued existence. The man had known every cab driver in Manhattan for twelve years, and when he entered a restaurant, the head waiter reached him before his left glove was off. He had never worked for the purpose of adding to the moral, mental, or material comfort of the world or himself, but he had toiled wonderfully and unceasingly at the business of amusement.

His income of some two or three hundred a week flowed into his bank from the coffers of a mile-long plant on Featherbed Lane, and with this kindly financial manifestation of a father's skill Hunnewell was content. He paid his bills promptly, occupied the attention of first-class tailors, avoided doctors, slept until two each afternoon, gave dinner parties for actresses, attended ball games, and generally wasted his life.

Rosamond Emeline Turner was simply engaged in spending the money her mother had expected to write into the family will. It was a mild, an innocuous amount, but it took care of a great many items, and it enabled Rosamond to haunt the "Dine Well" restaurants, even on the infrequent evenings marked by no dinner parties, and to sleep in the morning instead of hurrying down to an office.

Rosamond had no business in the world except that of adding to its ornamentation and general desirability. She was an astoundingly pretty woman at seven o'clock in the morning, and further than that there is no acid test of beauty, unless it be six o'clock. She had wandered on toward twenty-five years, learning that too much wine blights the complexion; that a majority of men are worth six cents a gross in the matter of morality and high principle; that red enamel is a beautiful substitute, but that a sound liver gives it aces and spades, and that a skillful person can be good in New York and get away with it. She had come to New York to study art—not water colors or magazine covers—but ART.

Rosamond's mother lived in Cincinnati, and wrote her three times a week to come home and marry the young architect in her church.

After some two years of seeing each other across the room, Rosamond and Wallace sat side by side, and raised their glasses to the continued joy of their mutual host. Twenty eminently proper guests gathered about the festive board, and, while they were few in numbers, there was nothing wrong with their throats and lungs.

"I see we're beginning to have a good time," Wallace remarked, touching his glass to hers. "I've often wondered if I should ever meet you."

"It's a long time since we first knew each other," she laughed. "Strange we haven't met, but I presume it's because we've been so occupied."

"The first night I ever remember you was when you wore a blue gown with white lace around your throat. The man you were with had diamond rings—sixteen of them, I believe—and I wondered what in the world he could say to interest you."

"He wasn't as fearful as he looked," she returned musingly. "That was Mr. Pepper of somewhere out West, and he was very happy and satisfied. He had just succeeded in borrowing most of the State of Nevada from the government, and it happened to be covered with valuable timber which he was going to con-

vert into mahogany beds or railroad ties before the government took back its State. He was later arrested for blocking a cross street with yellow bills. Westerners are so careless."

"How long have you been doing this?"

"Doing what?" she asked.

"This," Hunnewell waved his hand in a circle that embraced the dinner party.

"Not long; not nearly as long as you've been doing it."

"How do you happen to know that?"

"Because I've been mildly interested in you, Mr. Hunnewell. It wouldn't have been girlish or conventional or even modest to come to you and ask for a brief sketch of your life, but there are plenty of information purveyors, and when I asked them who you were they replied in detail. Of course, I presume many of the incidents are exaggerated. For instance, it isn't likely that you ever gave a midnight dinner to a comedy chorus at which the guests dined seated on zebras which you had borrowed from a circus?"

"It has all the elements of improbability," he laughed. "I gave a dinner in a basement where we used beer kegs. The similarity explains it. But the point is: How long have you been boring in this particular stratum of the social crust?"

"You are wrong," she parried. "The point is: How much longer will I continue to bore? I often wonder. When I feel that way I usually write to my mother. It's a vast relief."

Wallace ate in silence for a time. He cast a somewhat wearied eye about the table, and then turned to the girl beside him. The unexpected freshness of her complexion startled him. The brightness of her eyes—there without the artful aid of alcohol—caused him to think of the eyes of other women he knew. Her laugh was wholesome and buoyant, and her conversation lacked the studied artificiality he had half expected to find.

The corks were popping steadily, and the guests were warming up to the serious business of the feast, which was

nothing more than a determined effort to talk rapidly and in a slightly louder tone than that of the person on the right and the one on the left. This is an ironclad formula. A bohemian dinner party never varies from it after the fourth drink.

"This," Wallace said, turning again to the smiling Rosamond, "will probably be a pippin before it ends. Do you mind my asking who brought you?"

"I came with the girl in pink behind the flowers. Somewhere about the table are two men who said something about taking us home."

"Are you enjoying yourself?"

"I am."

"Will it continue to amuse you later on when things get fizzier?"

"I think not. I will probably be bored. Why do you ask?"

"I've just had what seems to me a pleasant thought. This is also going to bore me. Why couldn't I steal you for an hour or two? I have an inexplicable desire to talk, and I know where there is a big, cool dining room with no music whatever. Let us go there when this assemblage begins to turn on the fifth speed, and by going out quietly and begging a few pardons we will escape reproach and racket. I promise to convey you in safety to your home before my conversation begins to irritate you."

"You're an odd man," Rosamond said, studying him with smiling eyes. "I think you will be interesting, and it will make my head ache to remain here; so I will go with you."

At eleven o'clock the head waiter humbly made the first request for more silence from the joyous dinner party, and a few moments later Hunnewell explained to his host, and hoped that the rest of the evening would struggle along without him. A step ahead of Rosamond, he bucked through a line of restraining hands, and a moment later they were rolling up Broadway in an open cab.

"It's good to get the air again," he said. "How do you manage to keep your color?"

"Perhaps I won't keep it after I've

had twelve years of midnight dinners—and the rest of the game."

"Meaning me," he nodded. "Show me another chap who has gone through the mill and come out with as few wrinkles as I have. The fellows who started with me—most of them—are drunkards or total abstainers. They've either quit the white lights altogether, and gone into business, and wear brown suits, or they've dropped down a peg and made themselves impossible. I haven't done either."

"Yet," said Rosamond.

Wallace laughed.

"Go ahead," he said gayly. "You lecture me, and I'll lecture you. I haven't been scolded in three years."

In the palm room of the big Winsor, he told her about himself, and she found the recital interesting. Their tastes were similar in many things. She told him frankly that the ordinary affairs of life that interested other women were totally without attraction to her, and he confessed that if he were forced to command a business or manage an enterprise or paint a picture or drive a street car, he would die of desolation. It was after midnight when the conference ended.

"I think we had better meet again," he said quizzically.

Rosamond nodded.

"The next time you feel bored by the other people you know, I'll be glad to cheer you up. And don't forget that occasionally I get bored and melancholy myself."

"Whenever it happens I want to know. I'll come in a hurry. Good-by, and remember that you and I are somewhat alike."

"And that I am ten years your junior," she concluded laughingly.

A week or two later his car stopped before her home, and Rosamond came down the steps. There was genuine pleasure in her smile and greeting. They dined together in the noisiest restaurant on Broadway, and attended a problem play of a severe and threatening character.

During the six months that ensued the two saw each other frequently. No

party of Hunnewell's was complete without the dashing Miss Turner, and friends began to poke him in the ribs with the extended forefinger, and tell him that the web was closing around him. Rosamond also acted as the hostess at little gatherings in her own cheerful apartment, and her invitation lists were rarely without the name of Hunnewell. He went away suddenly to shoot in Canada, and during his six weeks' absence the girl uptown missed him, and admitted it to herself with a rueful grimace. When he returned there was an exceptionally festive blow-out.

"You've been gone an age," she remarked during a lull.

"Miss me?" he grinned.

"Frightfully. I didn't think it was in me."

"I'll make up for it, now that I'm back. The first thing I'd like to suggest for your amusement is a house party up in Westchester. There's a certain estimable lady up there who went to school with my mother, and she has been kind enough to invite you through my earnest solicitation. I want to see how you look in the country, and I'll show you some stone mountains as high as any building on Broadway, and talk to you about serious things."

The visit into the country came and went. Wallace fought off an impulse to return to the city for three days, and then he pleaded a mythical but plausible excuse and motored in. Rosamond had enjoyed herself thoroughly, and her hosts had been delighted with the girl.

"I'd like to go to a theater this evening," Rosamond had suggested on the way into town, and for the first time in their acquaintance her companion objected.

"I don't think it's polite of you to refuse when I want to go," she remarked, a trifle nettled.

"I don't exactly refuse," he answered. "If you insist of course we'll go, but I had been brewing another plan. I thought it would please you to have dinner at the Monolith. There's a new Italian band and some Swiss bell-ringers or trapeze performers or some-

thing. That's only part of my plan. The rest of it will be founded upon a suggestion from Mrs. Ellis, who whispered to me just as we left."

"What was it?"

"Nothing that had not occurred to me before. It isn't complicated or vastly original. If you'll agree to go to the Monolith instead of the theater, I'll confess everything."

Rosamond agreed, and they dined. The dinner was a gustatory success.

"Now," she said, "let's hear everything?"

"Quite simple and easy," he answered slowly. "I ought, perhaps, to begin by a long preliminary statement, a leading up stage, a couple of explanatory epilogues, and a review of future possibilities, but I shall not do so. You and I have been together a good bit during the last year or so, and there isn't more than a million important facts that we don't know about each other. I like you well enough to marry you, and now I'm going to find out whether you entertain the same feeling?"

"Wallace Hunnewell," Rosamond said, stopping completely the act of buttering a bit of bread, "are you proposing to me?"

"Not a bit more, and not a bit less. I want you to marry me, and I have probably wanted that one thing for a long time without being aware of it. If you accept me you know precisely what you are getting. I have never asked any other woman, which proves conclusively that I hold you in higher regard than anybody else. I am not sentimental, but if you reject me I shall—"

"You needn't," she replied. "I accept you."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do. I accept your proposal of marriage."

"Is it within the bounds of possibility that you love me?"

"I love you a little, and I expect to love you a great deal more. If I didn't I shouldn't accept you. So far we've been companions, but I've noticed a change in you and in myself, and if it isn't love it's probably as good an imitation as there is. I have also been

waiting for you to ask me to marry you for the last month. What did Mrs. Ellis have to do with it?"

"Nothing. She merely asked me why I didn't marry you, and I told her this afternoon that I intended doing so if I could. Furthermore, I suggest that we get married in a day or two instead of waiting for fool friends to congratulate us. Then we can give a wedding dinner or breakfast to the entire outfit."

"We'll have to have a home," Rosamond mused. "Where do you prefer living?"

"It doesn't matter so much about me. For that matter, it won't matter much to either of us, because I suppose home to us won't have the usual meaning. We're gadders, and there's no use disguising it. I happened to hear you speak of the Riverdale Apartments in complimentary terms one afternoon when we were up on the Drive, and I took the liberty of leasing a top-floor apartment."

"So confident were you," she laughed. "He could have subleased it. At any rate, we will go through the formal motions of having a home, and the mail man can leave our letters there. Tomorrow or the next day I'll be glad to accompany you around town on a shopping tour. I know a man downtown who can fix up a place so that it won't hurt your eyes to look at it."

"Here's luck," Rosamond exclaimed, holding her glass toward him. "May ours be the happiest marriage that either of us will ever hear of!"

"Same to you," he said, sipping his wine. "And when we get away from electric lights I'm going to kiss you."

"Perfectly proper," she said. "We're engaged."

The next day Wallace and Rosamond purchased a houseful of furniture, and when they wearied, the bride-to-be turned the details over to a home-making expert. A week later, standing under eighty dollars' worth of flowers, they were married, and six friends told them how glad they ought to be to have each other. They had agreed upon the six. They might have had six hundred.

"If I could think of a new place or an interesting one, we might have a traveling honeymoon," the new husband remarked when the wedding feast was ended.

"I like New York pretty well," Rosamond replied. "Let's stay here and pretend we're from Ypsilanti, Michigan. Some day, when we both get disgusted with the old town, we'll go out to Cincinnati, and I'll show you a fine mother."

The new home in the Riverdale was a beauty and a model. Breakfast was served at high noon daily because Wallace had determined to correct his habit of late rising, and the afternoon was spent downtown in pursuit of happiness, interesting companions, new restaurants, and brilliant methods of spending the evening. Rosamond gave soirées in the new home, which every one admired extravagantly. Wallace invited his friends, and showed them the originals of cartoons from the daily newspapers, wine casks rescued from Spanish castles, pipe racks made from the ceiling of the old Italian Food Dungeon, and slippers worn by Sarah Bernhardt before the war.

Their union was idyllic; of that there was not the slightest doubt. Both of them were born bohemians, fond of the noisy, gay existence in the heart of the metropolis, never wearying of the bright lights, the tinsel and glitter of Broadway, or the fluttering throngs that surged in and out of the thousand resorts they knew so well. Hand in hand they wandered unceasingly down the pathway that is paved with Excitement and walled with Pleasure when the mouth of the purse is large and the flow of the bills unending. They never seemed to tire of the theaters, the operas, the restaurants, hotels, and eating places that were neither hotels nor restaurants. Their monthly bills for cabs was amazing; their tips might have supported a frugal family of ten. Frequently they wearied of their pretty home, and lived in hotels.

One afternoon Wallace stepped out for an instant, and when he returned to the apartment in the Riverdale Rosa-

mond was seated at a window, darning the extremely large hole in the extremely small foot of her stocking.

"What are you doing?" Wallace exclaimed in the tone of utter astonishment he would have used had he come home and found Rosamond currying a horse.

"I thought I was sewing," she said shamefacedly. "But I guess I'm only trying to sew. I don't know much about it."

"Why don't you have the maid attend to it? Her work around here is light enough to permit it."

"I shall," Rosamond answered penitently.

And then came into the happy lives of these two bohemians a subtle change—a frightful change, which demanded deception. Rosamond considered the matter one afternoon for several hours, and determined upon a plan. Unknown and unsuspected by Wallace, she carried on a series of deceptions, waiting for his warning footfall in the corridor, facing him brazenly when he arrived, and never, so much as by the flicker of an eyelash, giving him an inkling of the true state of affairs.

She dusted the piano with her own hands; scoured the vases and cut glass with a piece of chamois; stalked fearlessly into her own kitchen and washed pans, dishes, crockery, and the silver; she bought stove polish openly in the delicatessen store, knowing Wallace would never inquire, and chastened the kitchen range until it shone resplendent; she polished the brass knobs of the doors; sprinkled roach powder about the sinks, and peered into corners with an investigating and threatening eye.

Worse still, she purchased sewing materials and a booklet that told much about the art, and in the quiet hours when Wallace was elsewhere she surrendered herself to the shocking vice, and made all sorts of garments, some easily recognizable and others filmy mysteries without name or description. The maid she bribed to secrecy.

And while these dark events were following each other, what was Wallace doing?

He had bought himself a pair of slippers with ragged edges and no heels, which he hoped to wear some time. Secretly he rummaged through bookshelves, and wagons deposited mysterious bundles, into which Rosamond was never allowed to peep. They were books—all sorts of books, including Shakespeare, Stevenson, Kipling, Scott, the Bible, Lives of Great Men, Macaulay, Balzac—the entire list of books that such men as William Dean Howells, Supreme Court Justice Hughes, and Samuel Blythe look upon with approval, and recommend to persons who aim to improve their minds.

Rosamond was deceiving Wallace, but her double-dealing was no more infamous than his. Locked away in the deep recesses of his most private closet were all sorts of objects that have nothing to do with the life of the true bohemian—brass fenders with which to build a log fire on wintry nights, and a tool chest full of tools for the manufacture of homemade thingamajigs. The store downtown had taken his secret orders for scores of home decorations, none of which was to be delivered. And thus matters went, the bohemian wife in terror of discovery as she worked a blue rose on a doily-to-be, and the bohemian husband planning a new and vastly superior ice box for the kitchen and quaking at the mere thought of telling Rosamond about it.

At his regular five-in-the-afternoon "Let's get a cab and go to Small's for dinner," her smile came as quickly as ever, and her alacrity never grew less. Frequently the thought of a dinner in their own pretty dining room fluttered through her mind as the maid worked over her gown, but she drove it away. Their gatherings in the low-ceilinged Italian place on Thirty-eighth Street were as rollicking as ever; the fun was just as fast and furious; the wit was as biting and the humor as spontaneous, and when they drove up to the Riverdale in the dim hours after midnight they were the same dyed-in-the-wool bohemians—to each other.

Together they sat in silence one evening, and stared through the window at

the first flickerings of a snowstorm. Their order had gone in a half hour before, and for some reason their buoyancy had deserted them. The little flakes eddied about the windows of their favorite restaurant—the big one on Broadway with the golden lions before the door—and the passers-by scurried along about their business, coat collars up and hands thrust in pockets.

The dinner came on, and their waiter hovered over them anxiously. For the first time the cocktails remained untasted. The oysters nestled in their hard beds undisturbed, and the consommé steamed unnoticed in its silver receptacle. In the waning light outside their window, a party of four stopped abruptly. It consisted of a father and mother and two little ones, and an accident had taken place. The larger of the children had dropped the bundle he carried, and coiled porterhouse steak, a bag of potatoes, a loaf of bread, and a bundle of celery tumbled nakedly to the sidewalk, while the family danced about the catastrophe in garrulous excitement.

"They've dropped their dinner," exclaimed Rosamond sympathetically.

"Now they've got it again," Wallace replied. His tone was animated. "They've rescued every ounce of it, and they're going home, and cook it, and have one grand time. Did you hear what I said, Rosamond? They're going home and cook their dinner."

She looked across the table. The faintest of smiles twinkled in the corners of her eyes.

"Yes," she answered. "They're probably going home, and he'll spread the cloth on the table, and she'll light the kitchen stove, and the kiddies will scamper in with the dishes, and pretty

soon the steak will be sizzling, and the potatoes will be browning, and there will be gravy for the children to sop their bread in, and the gas will be lighted, and after that——"

"After that," he interrupted, "after that, he'll pull off the working coat, and climb into a loose one, and——"

"And she'll put on a kimono and a——"

"And he'll find the old worn slippers, and slam his feet into an old chair, and light the black pipe, and she'll be singing out in the kitchen, and the kids will have out the schoolbooks, and——"

"Wallace!"

Rosamond sat up straight, and stared into her husband's eyes.

"Well?"

"Are you thinking, by any long chance, are you thinking of the same thing I am?"

"Home?" he asked, smiling.

"Let's."

"Buy a real meal before we go up?"

Rosamond nodded.

"Cook it ourselves?"

She bobbed her head more excitedly.

"And be regular home people—just—just like what we've been talking about?"

"More—twice as homy home people."

"Rosamond, I am with you till the stars fall. Let's get out of this immediately."

On the way uptown Rosamond said, thinking of the polished brass knobs and the cockroach powder:

"I have a confession to make, Wallace."

To which he replied, thinking of the tool chest and the sets of books:

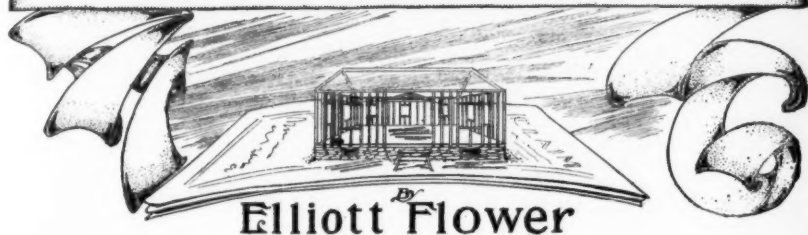
"So have I, Rosamond."



WINE

WITH wine as with life,
The trouble's at birth.
The youth may have promise,
But age shows its worth.
CLARENCE E. SWEZEY.

THE GIRL AND THE HOMESTEAD



THERE sure never was a nervier little girl than that there key pusher that came out to hold the homestead claim," remarked Jim Stutt reflectively.

"What would you mean by key pusher?" asked Alphabet Applegate.

"Oh, she worked one of them writin' machines in the city afore she come out homesteading," explained Stutt.

"Tell us about her," I urged.

"Just a moment, old chap," interposed Applegate.

He left his comfortable place in front of the camp fire, and moved stealthily away in the darkness. We could hear him making his way cautiously through the underbrush, and he occasionally appeared in shadowy outline among the trees. Thus he circled the camp, returning at last to his place by the fire.

"I fawncy we're quite safe," he remarked.

"Safe!" snorted Stutt in disgust. "What you expectin'—wild cats or Injuns?"

"Oh, neither of those, don't you know," returned Applegate soberly. "They don't worry me in the least, I assure you; but I've learned to be rawther afraid of the ladies. Just the mere mention of them makes me nervous."

"What's the matter with 'em?" demanded Stutt.

"Nothing—nothing at all, you know," was Applegate's hasty reply. "I fawncy the trouble is all with me, but I cawn't seem to help making a silly awss of myself whenever I meet one."

Stutt reflected. Stutt was our guide, and twice before he had taken us out for a little hunting trip, only to have all plans upset by Applegate's propensity to entangle himself in some adventure that involved a girl or woman. After the last adventure, on the Lower California border, we had hastened north to find Jim Stutt and seek a seclusion that would give Applegate at least temporary safety. Stutt, of course, knew only so much of this as had affected himself, but it was enough.

"I reckon you're right," he agreed. "It looks like you could make more kinds of a monkey of yourself over women than any other ten men."

Applegate accepted this, as became a man who realized that he deserved to be characterized even more harshly.

"And you don't know it all, old chap," he asserted; "not the hawf of it, really. I cawn't seem to do anything in this bally country without getting myself in a mess of some kind. When I try to be polite to a girl, don't you know, meaning nothing at all, some hasty chap comes along and wants to shoot me; and when I try to help a girl that's in trouble, as any gentleman would, she gets me in a horrible snarl, and then runs away; and when I see the girl I really want, the one in all the world for me, I cawn't get her, you know. Why, I set out once to buy a rawnch to get a girl, and I ended up with the rawnch, and not the girl. I'll be hearing from the guv'nor about the rawnch before long," he added, turning to me.

"You've had more than time to hear already," I suggested.

"Oh, the gov'nor won't be hasty, old chap," he explained. "I fawncy he'll have somebody investigate a bit first."

"Looks to me like you went at it wrong," remarked Stutt. "You sure didn't do it the usual Britisher way."

"How is that, old chap?" asked Applegate.

"Why, accordin' to your story," answered Stutt, "you went after the prop'ty to git the girl 'stead of goin' after the girl to git the prop'ty."

"Right clever, that," commented Applegate, "but I fawncied she went with the rawnch, don't you know. And," he added, after a pause, "I fawncy she'll go with the rawnch yet. Anyhow, we'll be going back there to find out awfter I hear from the gov'nor."

"Meanwhile, Stutt," I said, "it's your business to keep Applegate away from women. He means well, but he's not to be trusted."

"Right-o," agreed Applegate. "But it won't be for long, Stutt," he assured him. "I'm hooked up on the rawnch deal as soon as the gov'nor sends the money, and we're only passing the time until that comes. Your responsibility will end soon, old chap."

"Oh, it don't bother me none," returned Stutt, "so long as you'll stay put. I got you where you're safe now, provided you don't go skylarkin' off the trail. There don't no women come here, and to-morrow I'll give you some huntin' that'll make you forget there ever was any women."

"If you're quite sure I'll not have a chawnce to make a silly awss of myself," remarked Applegate, "I'd rawther like to hear about that girl, you know."

"The little homesteader?" queried Stutt.

"Yes. I always like to hear about the ladies—when I'm far enough away to be safe."

"Oh, this one won't ever trouble you none," Stutt assured him.

"Then let's hear about her, old chap," urged Applegate.

Stutt refilled his pipe, and settled him-

self more comfortably in front of the fire.

"She don't come into the story at the jump," he explained. "Fact is, a good bit of the story is the funny way she does come into it, and I got to tell it the way it happened."

"I was located some north of here then—at Boden—and there's some gov'ment land near that can be filed on for homesteads. A right lively time there is for a while, and anybody that's got a team of horses and a wagon can make money a-plenty. No rushin' and racin' and fightin', like there is when some reservation's opened, but the land is took up pretty fast, and what with haulin' lumber, and helpin' to build cabins and things, and freightin' out household goods and other supplies, there is work for anybody that wants it at good prices. The homesteaders mostly tries to do the work themselves, but there's always some things that they got to pay to have done when they're gittin' started."

"Well, after a bit there's talk at Boden of a claim that's entered in the name of a woman that nobody has seen. I hear that a man made the entry, and went away again right afterward. It ain't so strange that he enters the claim in the name of some woman, for now and then that happens, but it is strange that he goes away without tryin' to tie it down by doin' some work, like the law says you must. Others that took land goes to work on it, but there's nothin' doin' with this tract; it just stands there idle."

"Fawncy that!" commented Applegate.

"It sure does puzzle us some," said Stutt. "It looks like a fool thing to us to enter the claim and then skip out and let it lapse. And all the time there ain't anybody sees a sign of the woman. Her name is Hester Colvin, and that's all we know."

"Nothing in this bally country surprises me any more," remarked Applegate, "but go on."

"Well, jest as we've give the puzzle up as a thing that there ain't no answer to," Stutt continued, "this man comes back unexpected, and he goes at the job

of startin' things right lively—seems to be one of these business men that knows how to hustle himself and make everybody else hustle—shows that he's a real man by doin' a man's work, and makin' the men he hires go their limit. I'm one of them. I didn't see him at all the first time, but now he engages me to do some teamin', and I git to know him pretty well. He's one of the quick-actin', nervous fellers that makes up his mind to a thing before somebody else would hardly begin to consider it. He knows jest what he wants all the time.

"The house he puts up is some better than a log cabin, but it ain't much of a house. It's small, and it's done pretty hasty, but he's surprisin' pertickler in some ways. There's little things now and then, what really don't count at all, that's got to be done jest so, while there's more important things that can be done any old way. He sends me clear to town once for some coat hooks that he forgot when nails would have done plenty well enough, and he gives more time to makin' a closet with a cupboard and a set of drawers in it than he does to pretty much all the rest of the house.

"But he makes a mighty good job of the whole thing, considerin' the time. It ain't much to look at, but it's better inside than it is outside, and it's more than most of them has to start with. He uses some logs, but it's mostly real lumber that has to be hauled a long distance.

"Goin' back to the simple life and makin' a fresh start," he says to me once, 'is all right, but it don't do to make it too strong. The little girl is game, and she's got the right idee, but there's got to be some things the way she likes 'em.'

"Still, there ain't a sign of the 'little girl,' as he calls her, and I don't ask questions about what don't concern me."

"Most extraordinary!" commented Applegate, but whether he referred to the young man's course or Stutt's repression of natural curiosity, I was unable to determine. Either was surprising enough.

"When it's all done," Stutt went on, "he makes me go over it with him, inside and outside, and he's as proud as a boy with a new sled.

"Pretty fine, considerin' the time and the difficulties, ain't it?" he asks. "It ought to please the little girl, don't you think?"

"Not knowin' the little girl," I answers, cautious, "I can't say, but it's a good job."

"It'll look better yet when she sees it," he says. "I'll have some men out here and git part of the land cleared afore she comes. I aimed to start in when I first filed the claim, but I couldn't do it without sacrificin' a lot of money that would come in mighty handy later. There was a chance come to me back in the city that was too good to lose."

"Well, you come near losin' the land," I tells him.

"Yes," he says, "I know it. There's a limit in which you got to do some work, enough to show that you're a real homesteader, and I didn't more'n git to it in time. Fact is, if anybody had took the matter up, I ain't sure I could have held the land, but I got a good start now, so I don't look for any trouble."

"A vacant house don't count for much," I remarks, seein' a chance to draw him on now.

"It ain't goin' to be vacant," he comes back earnest. "I'm goin' to live here myself."

"It ain't your claim," I says, "so I don't see how you come to be doin' it all."

"He laughs at that. 'I'm the agent of the one that owns it,' he explains.

"Of course I know that's a lie, 'cause an agent don't do things the way he does 'em, and an agent don't have other business that makes him risk losin' the land, and an agent don't speak of the one that's payin' him wages as the 'little girl,' but there's nothin' for me to say if he don't want to talk out frank.

"Drive me to town," he says, after a bit, "while I stock up, and I'll show you how vacant this house is goin' to be."

"Well, I sure see how much of an agent he is durin' that ride. He can't talk of nothin' but the girl, now that he's started on that lay. You'd think there wasn't any other girl in the world, and I don't have to be told it's a case of splicin', when he's got things ready for her. It comes out, too, that she's in an office in the city, working a typewriter machine, and that this farm business is her idee. He's also a sal'ry man, and she holds that livin' on sal'ry in the city ain't the way to git nowhere, that your work don't count like it does when you're improvin' land that you own. Besides, she don't like the city nohow, but wants to be in the open with a home that's her own, where you don't have to figger on somebody raisin' the rent.

"She's the grandest little girl that ever lived," he says, "and she's got the nerve to come right out here and start housekeepin' in a tent, if I'd let her. She wants that we should *own* something, and we never would in the city. Her sal'ry ain't enough to let her save much, and I always spent all I got—up to lately. Then I had to save for this—got to have some money to git started. And when I went back the last time I got a chance to make quite a bit more. It looks like a wise thing to raise our margin some when we can. Now, Stutt," he says, his eyes glowin', "look what this little girl wants to do: she wants to come out here alone and start things, so's not to run no risk of losin' the claim; says she can git a shack put up and hold the prop'ty till I come. Can you beat that for nerve?"

"Well, I can't, considerin' that she's a city girl. It wouldn't be so surprisin' in a backwoods woman.

"I won't listen to it, of course," he goes on. "I figger I can git through in time to clamp down the claim myself, and it's been my idee all along not to have her out here till I got things in some sort of shape. Besides, I don't want her to know yet that I put the claim in her name; that's a surprise for later. But she wants to come, Stutt; she even cries when I won't let her. That's the kind of a nervy little girl she is! Why, there ain't another like

her in the world, and I'll work my head off to give her a farm that's worth ownin'."

"There ain't much time left afore winter," I suggests.

"That's all right," he says. "I got enough now to carry us for a year—that's what I stayed in the city for—and there's a lot can be done in winter gittin' ready for spring. There's some buildin', and fencin', and clearin' that can be done when the weather ain't too bad. We got to have a barn and some sheds, you know, and we can fix ourselves to open up reg'lar work the minute the weather permits. I'm goin' to the city for a week to clean up," he says, "and then I'm comin' back to git things in a little better shape before bringin' her out. When I first come, I hoped to have two or three months to git started, but time's so short now I can't wait to do all I planned. I got to bring her out before snow flies—she won't listen to nothing else—but I still got time to make it all a little pleasanter and easier for her."

"That's the way he talks all the way to town. He ain't said hardly a word of her until now, but now he's so full up that the talk flows continuous. I never see a man so much in love."

"My word!" put in Applegate. "I fawncy the girl must have been quite the same, don't you know, to be willing to go through so much. You have such extraordinary women in this bally country that I cawn't get used to them. Fawncy, now, wanting to go out into the wilderness like that! He was a lucky man, to be loved like that. What was his name?"

"Didn't I tell you that?" returned Stutt. "Why, his name was Horace Clarke, and," he went on, resuming his story, "he sure did set out to make things right for her, so far as he could. The truck he bought at Boden was scand'lous. First he picks out the furniture that he's really got to have, which ain't much, and then he keeps addin' all sorts of things that a woman likes to have, but don't rightly need, specially for home-steadin' purposes. Why, I got to remind him that he's gittin' more'n the

house will hold afore he stops, and then he starts in 'most as reckless on perceptions.

"'Do you think,' he says, when he finishes, 'that these things will be safe out there while I'm gone?'"

"'Safer'n they'd be in the city with two constables watchin' 'em,' I tells him. 'Stealin' ain't pop'lar in any country where folks has to leave their things unpertected while they're at work.'"

"'I was wonderin',' he says, 'whether to freight this truck out when I come back or to have you take it out while I'm away. I'm buyin' it now so as to save time when I come back, and it would save more time if it was took out now. I think I'll have you do it, Jim,' he decides, after thinkin' a minute. 'Set up the stove and the bed, but don't bother with the other stuff—jest dump it anywhere. I'll look after that when I git there, but it will be handy to have the stove and the bed up if I come late.'"

"Well, he goes to the city, and I freight the stuff out and leave it there, after settin' up the stove and the bed and fillin' the woodbox, and he don't come back."

"What!" exclaimed Applegate. "D'ye mean to say, old chap, that he abandons the house and everything, awfter all that trouble?"

"He don't come back," repeated Stutt, "in one week, like he said, or in two weeks or three weeks or four weeks, and the claim is slippin' away again. A vacant house don't hold a claim; there's got to be a homesteader in it. The buildin' of the house made it look like he meant business, but the leavin' of the house sets him back again. The land ain't never been occupied since he filed on it—that is, there ain't nobody really lives there or has lived there, and there ain't been any work done except buildin' the house. It sure looks queer, and everybody is wonderin' and talkin' about it. Yes, sir," emphasized Stutt, "four weeks goes by, like I said, and there's the house, all stocked up, lyin' idle, and the title to the land gittin' shadier and shadier all the time. Then comes the girl."

"Miss Colvin?" queried Applegate.

"No," returned Stutt, after a moment of hesitation, "it ain't Miss Colvin."

"My word!" cried Applegate. "Awfter all that, did they have a bally row and break off?"

"No," answered Stutt, "they didn't have no row."

"Then what's the awnswer, old chap?" asked Applegate, mystified.

"It's the same girl," explained Stutt, "only she ain't Miss Colvin any more; she's Mrs. Horace Clarke."

"I don't wonder it puzzled you all," remarked Applegate. "I cawn't see that anything happened as it should, from the beginning."

"It didn't," agreed Stutt, "but you won't git the story in a week of Sundays if you don't pull up some on the jaw line."

"What would that mean?" asked Applegate, turning to me.

"It means," I said, "don't interrupt."

"Fawncy that!" commented Applegate. "A key to the language would be a good thing, don't you think?"

"She comes to me," Stutt continued, as Applegate subsided, "and wants me to take her out to the place right away, but it don't look to me like a good time to do it. There's a feel of snow in the air and a look of snow in the clouds, and sometimes winter comes hard and sudden when it comes up in that country. Besides, she looks to me like the kind of a girl that ought to have a man to watch out for her all the time—little, you know, and not seemin' very strong. So I asks her why Clarke don't come."

"Well, it seems he's had an accident and is laid up in a hospittle. She sticks to him through the worst of it, but he's gittin' along all right now, and they decides it's time to clamp down the claim. It's her idee. He don't want her to come out alone, but there don't seem to be no other way. She argues that he'll be comin' along in a few weeks, when the doctors git through with him, and there ain't any use takin' chances, after 'most losin' the land two or three times a'ready. So he gives her a note to me, to make sure everything's all right, and lets her go, not bein' able to

help himself, anyway. But they're married first, so's to make it more proper.

"Well, ma'am," I says, after hearin' the story, 'it's sure nervy in you to try it, but you don't know what you're doin'. It's some early for real winter to set in, but there's a feel in the air that I don't like.'

"What of it?" she asks. 'The cabin's stocked up, ain't it?'

"Everything's done, accordin' to instructions," I says, 'and the bed and the stove is up, and the woodbox is full, but the other crates and boxes ain't been touched.'

"So much the better," she says. 'It'll give me occypation while I'm waitin' for Horace. He'll be comin' afore long. Of course,' she goes on, kinder sarcastic, 'if the feel of snow makes you afraid, I'll git somebody else. I can't see what harm snow's goin' to do. With the cabin stocked up, all I got to be afraid of is loneliness, and I guess I can stand that much for Horace after what he's done for me.'

"Well, that's true enough; there ain't no real danger that I can see, but it sure takes a plumb nervy woman to tackle that sort of thing alone at the beginnin' of winter.

"I come this far," she says, 'to locate on that land, and you don't s'pose I'm goin' to stop now, do you?'

"I saw she wasn't, so I took off my hat to her, and told her we'd better be startin' immediate if we wanted to beat the snow. She'd come on an early train and looked me up the first thing, so we had pretty much all day afore us."

Applegate seemed disposed to make some comment here, but refrained.

"No use wastin' time over the ride," Stutt went on. "She was travelin' light, havin' only a small trunk and a hand bag, and I made them hosses hit it up lively, 'cause it was feelin' more and more like snow all the time. She talked pretty continuous, and I could see when it come to love it was about an even thing between her and Clarke; they was both up to their eyebrows. Why, she asked me more'n a million times if he wasn't the grandest man that ever lived, and then proved that he was by show-

in' that he was movin' to the country all for her sake. He liked the city, but she wa'n't as healthy there as she should be, and needed some outdoor life, and she liked the country better, anyhow, and thought the best chance was there for folks that went at it the right way, so he give up the city idee to please her.

"And the land is entered in my name," she says. 'He told me so when I was leavin'. Ain't he jest grand? Wouldn't a woman do anything for a man like that?'

"Not bein' a woman," I says, 'I can't say, but you're goin' to git outdoor life a-plenty, if that's what you're needin', and I ain't sure you won't git some afore we reach the cabin.'

"And that's jest what she did," added Stutt; 'not so's to do no harm, but there's a taste of what's comin'. The snow begins to fall, and the wind to rise durin' the last few miles, and she ain't so chipper when she gits to the cabin, bein' some chilled, but she's still game. She don't think so much of herself then as she does of me—that's the kind of a girl she is—and she wants to know how I'll git back to town. I figger I can make it if I start right quick, and she tells me to go ahead.

"I'm all right now," she says. 'Don't you stop a minute.'

"This ain't the weather to leave a room without a fire," I says, 'but it won't take any time at all to start that.'

"It don't. The wood bein' ready, there wa'n't much of anything to do but dig a match out of my pocket and start her up, but I stay long enough to see that it's goin' good, openin' some of the boxes while I'm waitin'. It looks like I ought to open 'em all, but the wind outside is a-growlin' and a-whistlin' in a way to make a man hurry when he's got some distance to go, and she keeps tellin' me she's all right now and not to bother with anything. I sure got to like that little girl. There ain't many women got her grit, to stick it out alone in a cabin in a strange country with a blizzard started."

Stutt paused to light his pipe, and then seemed to fall into a reminiscent reverie.

"Well, what happened?" I asked impatiently.

"Oh, it was a real blizzard, all right, even if it was early," he answered. "I got back to town, a bit froze up, after losin' the road twice, but I didn't git there none too quick. The storm don't let up for three days."

"But the little girl, old chap?" urged Applegate.

"Well, I thought of her some considerable, like we all did," replied Stutt, "but I couldn't see how she could come to no harm if she stuck to the cabin, and I couldn't figger how she'd do anything else. I did kinder settle it with myself that I'd go out and see if she's all right as soon as the roads is open, but this Clarke feller hurried me some on that."

"He lands in town one day and hunts me up. He ain't lookin' very good, havin' one arm in a sling, and a bad ankle, and bein' some pale and thin."

"Stutt," he says, 'I read about this blizzard, and I ain't had a wink of sleep since. Is the little girl out there?'

"She is," I answers.

"How soon can you start?" he asks.

"There ain't nobody got through yet," I tells him. "They're tryin' to open the roads, but nobody but a fool would look to git through now on anything but snowshoes."

"Stutt," he says, and I never see a man look so desp'rit, 'I been fightin' three doctors ever since I heard of it, and I beat 'em all; they fin'ly *had* to let me go, 'cause things couldn't be any worse for me than what they was while I was worryin' and ragin' that way. Why, I 'most smashed myself up ag'in by tryin' to punch a doctor. Now, Stutt," he says, 'after I've beat three doctors on this thing, do you think I'm goin' to lay down to any damn teamster? I mean business, Stutt.'

"I see that he did. 'Mr. Clarke,' I says, 'we start at daylight in the mornin'."

"Which we did, takin' two men with us to help open up the worst places, and we got through. Some stretches of the road was already opened, and some was so bad that we had to break off to one side or the other to find the easy places,

but we got through. Clark was like a crazy man all the time, urg'in' us on, and bein' prob'ly worse'n he would have been if he could have helped more himself, and he went clean out of his head when we see the chimney with no smoke comin' out of it.

"My God! She's dead!" he yells, and it sure looks that way.

"The cabin is all snowed up, with no sign of life in it, and the doorway has to be dug out afore we can git in, and then the little girl ain't there."

"What!" cried both Applegate and myself.

"She ain't there," repeated Stutt. "Every box is opened, like she had set out to fix things up, but it's plain she quit sudden if she did, for there ain't but a few things on the shelves, and everything else is scattered about the floor. There's a plenty wood in the woodbox, and more in the shed by the kitchen door, so it don't look like she'd stayed long after I left her."

"The way Clarke goes through the place, lookin' for her where you couldn't hardly hide a tobacco box, is awful. Then he runs out and begins diggin' in the snow with his one good hand, and we all turn in with shovels. It's a fool idee to think of findin' her in all that snow, but we're that sorry for him that we're willin' to dig for a week steady if he says the word. Fin'ly he calms down a bit, and sees it himself."

"No use of that," he says, discouraged. "I don't think she's hereabouts, anyway. We got to send back to town for a gang of men—all that can be had—and open up the roads, and make a big search. The condition of the house shows that she was either scared away or took away, and there's no tellin' where the search may take us. It ain't in the dooryard that we're goin' to find any trace of her."

"That sounds reasonable," I agrees. "We'll go back and—"

"What!" he cries, becomin' crazy ag'in in a minute. "Me go back without findin' her! No, sir! I stay here with the two men we got and keep huntin'. Why, Stutt," he says, and I never see such agony in a man's face,

'I sent that little girl, my wife, to her death. You know yourself she couldn't git away from here alive after the blizzard set in. I been tryin' to make myself believe it's possible, but it ain't.'

"That's the way it looked to me, but I couldn't say so.

"'D'you think I'm ever goin' back till I know what's happened to her?' he keeps on. 'You go back for more men and—— What's that?' he asks, sudden.

"It comes to me at the same time—sleigh bells. There's somebody comin' up the road. It seems kinder surprisin', when the road's only jest opened a little bit, and ain't open now beyond the cabin, and he limps out to where he can see better, me follerin'. The next minute he lets out a whoop, and goes pilin' down to meet the sleigh like he never had a bad ankle in his life. And the little girl that's sittin' on the seat with Ike Brooks jumps down into the snow to meet him. Then there was such doin's, such huggin' and kissin' right out there in the snow, as you never saw in your life. They didn't care no more for me, and Ike, and the other two men than they did for the hosses.

"'How did you come to be bringin' her over, Ike?' I asks when I have the chance.

"'She saw you passin',' he says, 'but she couldn't git out in time to hail you, so there wa'n't nothin' to do but hitch up and foller, knowin' how scairt her husband would be.'

"'But how did she come to be at your house?' I persists.

"'Why,' he says, 'I stumbled over her in the snow while I was drivin' in a cow that was tryin' to git lost and froze to death the day the storm started.

She'd made a game fight to git to us, havin' seen our house when passin' with you, but she ain't made for that kind of weather, and couldn't hold out. She was frostbit a little, but Mrs. Ike knows how to handle that sort of thing, and pulled her through with no harm done.'

"Ike don't seem to want to really explain, but I keep at him to know why she was leavin' the cabin at all.

"'Ask her,' he says.

"She hears that, and looks up, seemin' to know what it means.

"'Why, Mr. Stutt,' she says, 'the ride out here tired me, and after a bit of lunch I took a nap, forgettin' to put more wood on the fire, and it was out when I woke up, so I opened all the boxes, and——'

"Jest then one of the men who'd run in ahead to start the fire sings out: 'Where in tarnation is the matches?'

"'There ain't any,' she says, and Clarke would have slumped right down in the snow if she hadn't steadied him."

There was a moment of silence when Stutt ceased speaking, and then Applegate suggested: "If it had been a man, now?"

"What more could a man done?" demanded Stutt.

"Nothing at all, old chap," replied Applegate, "but he'd have had a pocketful of the bally things for his pipe, don't you think, on a trip like that, just as you had when you first started the fire. A woman, I fawney, is——"

"That's sure a nice way to tail off a thrillin' story!" snorted Stutt.

"Isn't it, old chap?" returned Applegate placidly, and I suddenly realized that the Englishman had evened up the score with the guide.



THE MAN WHO COULD NOT LOVE



EVEN the men who called him "friend" admitted that Robert Adams was self-centered, at times cruelly frank, more often taciturn. Yet Hélène knew that for her he meant happiness.

He possessed neither subtlety nor distinction. Hélène was content with his sincerity, his earnestness, his stability of purpose.

He was punctiliously courteous to women in a distinctly impersonal way. The vainest woman could not deceive herself on this score. He would place a chair for her, pick up her fan, or ask if she were comfortable, as if the attention were the result of habit, never a matter of personal deference. Let another woman suddenly slip into her place, and he would say precisely the same thing in precisely the same tone. Yet Hélène thrilled when he adjusted her scarf or fastened her glove.

For Hélène was deeply, wondrously in love, with that abiding, unwavering affection which wells up from maternal instinct—rather than from passion. For him she had been waiting, and she was thirty when they met. Thus they drifted toward matrimony, their small world watching their progress, first in amazement, then in pity for Hélène, and finally in resignation if not satisfaction.

Women said: "Hélène is old enough to know what she is doing. There must be a side of his character which we have never seen." And they sent her out to dinner with him.

Men said: "Well, Adams must be a sentimental Jekyll and Hyde. He's never let us even imagine that he had a heart." And unconsciously they warmed to him.

Only Hélène knew the truth—and she did not hear it until the night he asked her to be his wife. His proposal was characteristic. They had heard "La Bohème." Hélène, intoxicated by the music and the nearness of the man she loved, had looked almost regal. As they had threaded their way through the crowd in the lobby of the Metropolitan Opera House, Adams had caught the comments of those who were judges of beauty. On the homeward ride, he had responded to her remarks in the barest monosyllables. Hélène had not been piqued at this. She often felt that in silence they were closest.

He had followed her into the house; and now, as she sat drawing off her long gloves, he stood watching her, his figure erect, unyielding, his expression alert. When she had laid aside the gloves, he drew up a chair, seated himself before her, and suddenly took both her hands in his.

"Hélène, will you marry me?"

For one long, wonderful moment the woman felt as if she were being rushed through space on the bosom of Joy; then she looked into his eyes, and the glory faded from around her. He was studying her exactly as he had on the night they had met at the Barton dinner.

The gray of his rather prominent eyes was as clear, as keen as it had been the first time she had gazed into their cool depths across a blur of orchids. She glanced down at their clasped hands, and knew that hers thrilled alone. Hers clung, but his did not grip. Through her innermost being a spiritual shudder ran. Its outward, physical evidence was an attempt to withdraw her hands. But he caught them just as the finger tips slipped past his own.

"I do not propose to deceive you. I will not tell you, as perhaps I might very easily, that I love you dearly, that I am happy only in your presence, because it would not be true. I want to be absolutely honest and sincere in all that I say to you. Between us there can be no pretense, because I want you to be my wife."

"Why?"

It was a mere whisper, and he drew her now cold finger tips back into the hollow of his firm palms.

"Because I need a wife and a home. You are the one woman who, I believe, could make that home complete."

"Why?"

A gleam of impatience flickered in his eyes at her insistence.

"I do not know. Most women I forget before I've turned the first corner. You have a trick of following me to my rooms, out on the golf links, even into my private office."

He seemed to be talking to himself rather than to her. The ice around her heart parted just a trifle.

"You never jar upon me. I know nothing about clothes; but I realize that yours are not merely the foolish trappings of fashion, but a part of you. The chatter of the average woman irritates me. What you say is always worth hearing. When my mail contains a note from you, I always open that first!"

"But you do not love me?"

It was the cry of her who had asked for bread and received a stone! For an instant he hesitated, then he met her glance unflinchingly.

"I wish I could say it—for my sake as well as yours. But I don't want you to think me utterly selfish. If I can-

not give you what men call love, I can give so much else that is really worth while. You understand—you would be the one woman in my life. I know I will be very proud of you, and I believe our companionship will be ideal. But I have no capacity for loving. I must have been born without it. My affections are governed by my head, not by my heart."

At the intense bitterness in his voice, she suddenly remembered a story that had been told over teacups. Once more her fingers clung to his.

"And so you will make an innocent woman pay the penalty of a foolish woman's mistake?"

He met her questioning glance without a quiver. He spoke in the voice of one who had analyzed rather than brooded over a wrong.

"No; I never really loved *her*. If I had, I would have grieved and missed her. Instead, I only felt humiliated by her—infirmity."

Silence fell between them. The man was staring into the past; the woman into the future. Then suddenly he laughed whimsically, and leaned toward her.

"Hélène, I realize that this is a strange wooing, and with no other woman would I dare to be so frank. To any other woman I would probably have lied. I would have sworn to a love I do not feel. But I can't lie to you—because you would read me through and through. You understand me. I've heard men's voices thrill as they spoke of the one woman in the world, and I've envied them. Again I've watched my kind, and wondered if this overwhelming passion they call love is a blessing or a curse. But, whatever it is, it is denied me. Hélène, are you brave enough to marry a man who is convinced that he can never love?"

"You have not asked me—whether I—care for you."

The man's entire bearing changed. For the first time his voice lost its metallic ring, and his head bent.

"I wish, dear girl, that you cared—less!"

A tender smile curved her lips, to which the color was returning.

"I will marry you!"

The words were spoken gravely, yet not without joy. Her figure relaxed. Her expression became serene. But when Adams, rising to leave, drew her into his arms and kissed her, she felt that he did so because it was expected of him. Under no consideration would he fail the woman who was to preside over his home.

How long she stood there alone, just beyond the circle of rosy lamplight, she never knew. As she started to mount the stairs, she caught herself wondering why Morton, most admirable of butlers, had fallen asleep on the settle; and when she entered the room, she found her maid huddled under a shawl in the wing chair. Somehow the night passed; and, as the morning broke, she who was to be granted her wish—to become the wife of Robert Adams—slept.

During their brief engagement, and especially as their wedding day approached, Hélène thought more of the task before her than of bridal finery and prenuptial festivities. She realized that, during those last few weeks, Adams showed none of the impatience, the ardor, the desire for possession which by every right of womanhood should alternately thrill her and fill her with vague fears. Yet she would not permit herself to feel that she had been denied one jot of the joy of living. He—the man she loved—the only man she ever had loved—the only man she ever could love—wanted her to be his wife. It was enough for the present. All else would be added unto her.

And so in dreams she planned her campaign. She would not beg for love. She would not bore him with excessive devotion. Above all things, she would not stoop to pique his love by silly flirtations with other men. She would awaken his latent capacity for loving by the steadfastness and strength of her own passion.

She entered upon her task buoyantly. Months passed. The buoyancy faded into dull, indefinable fear. Their com-

panionship was all that Adams had pictured. He did not disguise his pleasure in her company. In a hundred ways he showed that she more than realized his ideals and fulfilled his hopes. But between them there was always a barrier which she could not define.

A year passed, and then she put the fateful question. They had been entertaining at dinner. Adams had dropped into her dressing room for a chat. Hélène dismissed her maid. In hours like this she felt most hopeful.

The dinner had been marred by the rather tactless conduct of a beautiful but selfish young wife. Adams watched Hélène as she moved about quietly, gracefully. She was removing some feminine finery from his favorite chair. In a moment he would draw it close to her white-and-gold fireplace.

"I couldn't help wondering, as I watched that foolish woman, how I would feel if my wife should so far forget herself and her position."

Hélène paused before him, smiling brightly. He reached out for her hand, and held it firmly.

"You're a wonderful woman, my dear, a wonderful woman."

She laid her free hand on his shoulder and looked up into his square, masterful face.

"But you don't love me?"

Something like a spasm of pain sharpened his features, and he dropped her hand.

"Hélène, never ask that question again. Can't you understand that if I did—I would tell you so with joy and thanksgiving? You took this chance when you married me."

She left his side and stood beside the mantel, staring down into the bright flames. He followed her.

"You don't think I'm cruel? You've not been utterly unhappy this past year, Hélène?"

"No, dear," she answered quietly.

"But not happy?"

She did not answer, and, without a word, he turned and left her.

From that hour Hélène's life was ordered on different lines. Not that she relaxed her brooding, tender vigil over

her husband; but she sought relief from surging feelings and biting disappointment in other channels. She became a prominent and effective figure in big social movements. Her husband's life broadened with hers. In time an invitation to break bread in their home was regarded as an honor.

But there were hours when Hélène's marvelous self-control failed her, when she found herself wondering if her husband was not deliberately cruel, or obsessed by some morbid idea. Then her thoughts would revert to his unfailing consideration. He remembered every anniversary, and paid her the highest compliment unthinking man pays to exacting woman when he recalled her preferences in flowers, books, and jewels.

Three years more rolled round. Hélène found herself strangely resigned to her position as an unloved wife. She had never permitted herself to brood or become morbid. In many ways her life was very full, quite complete. If she had made a mistake in her marriage, if she had overestimated the compelling power of her own love, at least she would not become embittered, and she would not admit her defeat.

Then suddenly, for the first time, they were separated for some weeks. Adams was summoned to the Pacific coast on business, and the family physician advised against Hélène's accompanying him. She was just recovering from an attack of grippe. She wrote to Robert daily the details of her even, quiet life. She knew that he would find pleasure in each word picture. He was essentially domestic in his tastes.

In reply, he described the varying success of the enterprise which had called him West. Several times he lapsed into personalities.

If you were here to-night we would go to—but it is stupid to do that sort of thing alone.

I dined with the Blanks last night. They expressed their regret that you were not able to accompany me, a regret which I share.

But not once did he write:

I miss you, dear.

Hélène was thinking of this when she

followed the decorators into her husband's library. A ceiling had fallen, and she wished to order the repairs personally. Two servants were moving his huge mahogany desk, a family heirloom, with overhanging drawers and shelves. As the unwieldy piece of furniture was swung round, a grayish-white oblong fluttered from the back of a drawer, and landed at Hélène's feet. She picked it up and looked into the face of a woman; a face alluring, with a Cupid-bow mouth and heavy lashes.

Mechanically she issued her orders. Then, with the photograph in her hand, she returned to her room. She sat down at her desk; and, propping the photograph against a bronze figure of the Winged Victory, she folded her arms and stared at the beautiful face. Bit by bit the tide which represented her sense of defeat and loss rose within her, until suddenly she cried aloud: "You—you killed his belief in all women. That is why he cannot love me. I hate you! I hate you!" And she struck at the lovely face with her clenched fist. With the Winged Victory, it went crashing to the floor behind the desk.

When she came back to a confusion of sounds, her physician was scrutinizing her gravely.

"I told you that grippe was tricky. You went out too soon."

She shook her head.

"No! I remember—it was the pain. I've had it before, often—but never like this?"

The next day the family physician, accompanied by an eminent surgeon, returned. The verdict was reached quickly.

"The operation must be performed at once."

She sat quite still; but she was not thinking of the surgeons, the hospital, or herself.

"Next week?" she asked at last.

"In forty-eight hours," was the eminent surgeon's reply.

"It is impossible," she said, closing her lips firmly. "My husband left San Francisco yesterday. I must see him—first."

The surgeon looked at her sharply. He read determination, not fear, in her colorless face.

"It will reduce your chance of recovery to one in a hundred."

"Just the same, I shall wait!"

She lay in the highest-priced room of the city's finest hospital, her muscles rigid, her nerves taut. Her husband's train had arrived at the station. Even now he must be nearing the hospital. For the hundredth time she rehearsed the scene which would fill the few moments the surgeon had allowed them. She would not ask him if he loved her. He might say no—

Of course, he could not grasp all in a minute the gravity of the situation. He would not believe it possible that she could die. Always he had gloried in her perfect health. Once he had expressed contempt for sickly women. No; decidedly it would not be wise to ask whether he loved her. But she might say: "Will you miss me?"

And in just what tone? Appealing? Hopeful? Confident? Mechanically her white lips formed the question.

The head nurse left the room abruptly, and entered another, where the family physician, the eminent surgeon, the latter's two assistants, and the anesthetist, all clad in white, waited impatiently.

"I never did believe in postponing operations," exclaimed the nurse. "She's losing her remarkable nerve. Three days would break almost any one's."

The eminent surgeon turned to the family physician.

"I told you we were taking big chances."

The family physician frowned.

"Knowing the woman, I can't agree with you."

And, in the adjoining room, the woman's lips moved again.

"Will you miss me, Robert, if anything goes wrong? Will you miss me? And he will answer: 'Yes, dear girl, I

can honestly say that much. I will miss you.'"

Far down the corridor, the elevator door closed with a clang. The figure on the bed quivered. Hélène listened for his firm, brisk tread. It was not he, after all! The footsteps on the concrete flooring were halting, uncertain. They stopped before the door. She wondered vaguely, irritably, why the nurse had left her alone with the door ajar. Some one gripped the knob. She reached for the electric bell cord that lay on her pillow. Before she could ring, her husband stepped inside and closed the door behind him.

She caught one glimpse of his pale, distorted face. Then he was kneeling at her side, his face hidden in the soft, white curve of her throat. His right arm was flung across her heart. It was heavy. She gasped for breath.

"Hélène! Hélène!"

Her name was a wail—a prayer.

"Can you ever forgive me? Because I denied love—because I looked for a blinding flash, I missed its pure radiance. Hélène, girl, you won't leave me? I—can't live without you!"

Summoning the last atom of strength left in her pain-racked body, she turned her head until her lips found his, and there she drank deep of courage, and endurance, and hope, and—love.

Downstairs, in the superintendent's private office, an assistant was reporting to her chief.

"She rallied just as we moved her into the operating room. But I never saw a man so broken as her husband. It was cruel to send him those telegrams!"

The superintendent was fifty, and possessed of an executive mind. She spoke with irritation.

"I can't understand a woman's taking such chances as she did for purely sentimental reasons."

The assistant superintendent was young. She spoke softly.

"I can! It must be glorious to wait for a man who loves you as he loves her!"



VILLA BY THE SEA

BY F. BERKELEY SMITH



THE alluring poster heralding the opening season at Bel-Air Plage—"The Pearl of the Norman Coast"—had been tacked up by the enterprising real-estate company in every railroad station from Paris to Trouville.

This happily conceived lithograph resembled Dinard at its gayest, with Monte Carlo in the middle distance, and the Garden of Eden fading away in a violet haze in the background. The day this polychromatic lie depicted was one of sparkling sunshine. Famous beauties of the Parisian stage were bathing in an emerald green and sapphire surf. Golf, tennis, and diabolos were in full swing on the velvety dunes. Every child on the perfect beach was exquisitely dressed and beaming with health. Their sand forts flaunted the tiny flags of all nations, a convincing proof in itself of Bel-Air's international popularity. Their mammas were all young and smartly gowned; everybody owned a new automobile, and the men of untold wealth and leisure lolling about their superb cars were smiling in faultlessly pressed flannels. There was a "Joy of life" about the Pearl of the Norman Coast that to the gullible *bourgeoisie* was irresistible. It is needless to say that nothing the gay poster depicted existed at Bel-Air.

Bel-Air is a place a crow would avoid. It is too lonely—too bare. The low, jagged dunes fronting the sea are flanked by a line of new brick villas that

stand up as stark against the sky as a row of packing boxes on end. They have an air of being stranded there at high tide. A few tufts of wire grass struggle here and there through the shifting sand for an existence. The solitary pedestrian, passing the Pearl of the Norman Coast after dark, whistles for comfort until he gets by. When it rains, Bel-Air becomes even more desolate. It becomes tragic—but it suits that genial friend of mine, Monsieur Paul Hippolyte Toupin. It is gay enough at his Villa Rose.

Toupin adores the seashore. He rented the Villa Rose with enthusiasm. "Paris!" he has a habit of exclaiming. "*Mais c'est la misère, mon cher!*" ("But 'tis dire misery, my good fellow!") Despite the fact that this *bon viveur* of a Parisian knows the "misery" of Paris as well as the inside of his pocket, and has, during most of his fifty years, enjoyed his full share of its gayety. He has known, too, its strenuous side, for Toupin has twice been elected deputy, is decorated with the Legion of Honor, and has amassed a snug fortune in commerce. His Villa Rose, another horror in brick with majoлика trimmings, which has the distinction of being isolated from the end of the line of packing boxes, is the first to be opened, and the last to be closed.

Its four brick walls afford the only shade in a ten-acre lot of sand shelving back from the dunes to the main road. Here there is another box in brick—

"The Hotel des Amies Réunies," out of whose windows are hung to dry the bathing suits of some theatrical ladies on vacation, who spend most of their time in calico wrappers purchased in Montmartre.

You enter the Toupin property by a white gate—the clasp to the necklace of barbed wire, back of which, Cosette, a patient mite of a donkey, is picketed, ready for an emergency, nosing around the tufts of wire grass within the limit of her chain, preening her long, velvety ears for hours in the gentle breeze screening over the dunes; standing in meditation when it drizzles; grateful that she possesses a shady side when the wind is west and Bel-Air shimmers under the noonday sun, though her shadow is so small it is hardly worth while contemplating; never knowing what hour of the day or night she may be called upon to save the situation. Tuesday it was nearly three in the morning before she got to bed. I have had many a long talk with Cosette, and I am convinced she considers the Villa Rose a *maison des fous*, which in candid French means an insane asylum. She will tell me almost anything *entre nous* if I will only scratch her ears, close down where they emerge from her strong, dusty, little neck.

Toupin bathes early and late. A big green wave smashing over his fat back in September makes him roar with delight. He loves to lie and bake in the hot sand, packing himself well up to his pointed gray beard, and cracking away the crust with a yawn when he is sufficiently baked. He loves as well to doze in his canvas chair, which he fills to the squeezing point, and whose left leg, still labeled with the price from the bazaar, creaks ominously under his weight.

He will often spend the whole day between tides digging for sand eels, fishing for crabs, and spading up sputtering clams, and will walk for miles up the beach, filling his colored handkerchief with glittering shells. There are days, too, when Toupin goes rushing off through the country in his big

red car when it runs; and, when it refuses to budge, there is his smaller one—a squat, greasy little automobile, as noisy as a threshing machine; and when both are out of commission, which often happens, there is Cosette, whose tub of a cart has all it can do to carry Toupin on a trot.

Nothing ever worries Toupin. Every day, to him, rain or shine, or filled with the daily tragedies and farce comedies of life, is amusing—immensely amusing. His laugh is big and hearty, like himself, a laugh that subsides in a high-keyed chuckle—irrepressible, for it bubbles up from the depths of his good nature. There is a merry twinkle in his eyes, and his health and appetite are of the best daily. There is a plentiful sprinkling of gray hairs in his short-cropped hair and pointed beard, but even these, like everything else in life, Toupin takes as a joke, even to the impossible moods of Madame Toupin, who is young and pretty, a captivating little brunette, slim and nervous, with the dark eyes of an odalisque, and whose temperament is as fickle as the sea breeze.

When Madame Toupin assumes a fit of jealousy, plunges into extravagance, becomes the next day as penitent and silent as a nun, or enjoys an attack of hysterics—Madame Toupin is as much at home as an actress in all four—Toupin fills out his big chest with a breath of sea air, stretches forth his arms in his white duck suit, and smiles over his flowing black cravat. The cravat of an artist, which gives him the air of a happy-go-lucky bohemian.

Toupin has no artistic taste; most of us who have become slaves to it. A discord in music makes me wince. A false harmony in color affects me with a sensation akin to pain. I am as fastidious as an epicure in wines, and the presentation of nourishment. Neither can I dine happily under the brutal glare of a suspension lamp with a pink-and-green shade, or enjoy the warmth from a self-feeding stove ornamented with nickel cupids.

I have a horror, too, of the damp, red tablecloth and the heavy, clammy, red

napkins found in French villas by the sea, and thrust for future identification in dull pewter rings bearing the thumb marks of the maid. All these the good *bourgeoisie* delight in. They are in keeping with the imitation bronze goddesses of Spring and Summer poised on either side of the chocolate-marble clock, whose pendulum serves as a gilt swing for a china child.

They are all fresh from the bazaar in the Villa Rose. Toupin spared no expense. He showed me the idiot child in the swing with pride, and reminded me that the clock never lost a minute. Whereas the Toupins are never on time. It is safer to invite them to tea to be more or less sure of their arrival for an eight-o'clock dinner, which they are more likely to arrive at by nine, and which Toupin will merrily explain was the fault of the big car refusing to budge, the threshing machine out of commission, and Cosette and two bicycles to the rescue.

At the Villa Rose, the feasts are movable, breakfast often becoming a late luncheon, dinner frequently a midnight supper, and bedtime close to dawn; yet never have I seen more lavish hospitality. It needs just such a red tablecloth of tough fiber to stand the daily onslaught of steaming dishes, and the wine is sound and subtle—musty, cheerful bottles; some hailing from an ancient château in Burgundy, a certain golden champagne from Rheims, and a smooth, savage old vintage from Corsica that would make a pirate chief forsake his ship on the eve of a conspiracy.

I had been hard at work for a month up the coast from Bel-Air, in a picturesquely dead old sea village called Les Rochers, harboring a plain, clean little tavern known as the Cheval Blanc, where a houseful of fellow painters and myself discussed art at luncheon, and renewed the tumult at dinner. Those interminable opinionated debates over technique and broken color, the true value of the high light, and the average banality of composition in the modern school. I had grown satiated with the

aesthetic, and longed for common old Bel-Air, for good old Toupin, who could not tell a Corot or a Daubigny from a dining-room picture in a bazaar, and to whom the sun shone, rain or shine, three hundred and sixty-five days in the year.

Vive la Bourgeoisie!

"Come and stay with us," Toupin had insisted a dozen times in the last month, but I had stuck to my unfinished canvases. The red car, just out of the hospital, and still convalescent, growled over to Les Rochers this August afternoon, with orders to stay there or bring me back.

"Three old friends and my little niece are here," Toupin had added, in his insistent note.

To-day I needed no urging. In half an hour I had abandoned the Cheval Blanc and its long-haired Preraphaelites, and was en route for the Villa Rose.

The red car left me at the white gate, smoking like a smudge, and still suffering from lung trouble on the starboard side, and I wondered how any man but Toupin could smile when he had paid eight thousand francs for so blatant a swindle. Possibly, I thought as I passed through the white gate, it had been purchased, like the rest of his seaside possessions, at the bazaar.

The sun was setting as I stopped to rub Cosette's ears, a red disk sinking into a calm sea as heavy as oil, and even Cosette was grateful for the cool of the approaching twilight after the heat of the long day.

Over on the crest of the dunes, to the right of the Villa Rose, a group of four figures stood watching me from the platform of a portable glass summer-house, an unpopular rendezvous for lovers, but a snug retreat, with its swinging canvas chairs, when the wind blew. So I left Cosette, and trudged up in the heavy sand toward the group from which Toupin now waved a welcome to me, looking like a fat Pierrot in his suit of white duck. He started to wade down through the sand to meet me, but I waved him back. Madame Toupin blew me a kiss in greeting, so

did a tall young woman beside her, whose arm, as I drew nearer, I saw was about my hostess' neck. I strained my eyes, but could not recognize her, so I accepted the mark of affection in the spirit in which it was sent, and returned it with my best wishes to both.

The fourth figure in the group was that of an elderly man who, as I came within speaking distance, ceased talking to the young woman—whose hair I now discovered to be blond—and, thrusting his hands behind his back, straightened, and awaited my arrival.

"How goes it, my old one?" cried Toupin, gripping me heartily by both shoulders as I leaped to the platform of the summerhouse.

Toupin welcomed me with as much enthusiasm as if I had been rescued from the sea. Madame Toupin's dark eyes were alight, her saucy, nervous mouth opened in a catlike smile, revealing her white teeth, white as ivory in contrast to her dark skin and hair. A welcoming mood that I felt might change the next moment to one of pique or jealousy. She gave me her shapely little hand, and drew me firmly toward her guests.

"But I know him!" laughed the one with the golden hair, half closing her blue eyes mischievously as my hostess started to present me.

"Ho! Ho!" roared Toupin. "She is marvelous—Marcelle! She knows everybody. It is true that, *hein?* Eh, my little flirt?"

He chuckled, amused at the unexpected little comedy; and, while I endeavored to conceal my puzzled embarrassment, the elderly man shot me a glance from beneath his bushy eyebrows, disclosing a pair of small Machiavellian black eyes, as hard and brilliant as polished onyx.

"Mademoiselle Valcourt, Monsieur Villerocque," announced my hostess.

I bowed.

Monsieur Villerocque gravely closed a sensual under lip, framed by a short, square beard, bent stiffly, and again straightened—this time with a look of sullen suspicion.

"*Bonjour, toi!*" exclaimed my un-

known, with the ease and frankness of a Montmartroise, and that indescribable timbre of voice one hears in late cafés.

"You see, I have a better memory than you," she added, and her smile spread to join two dimples on either side of her retroussé nose—the nose and mouth of a Parisian *gamine*.

The eyes of Villerocque scrutinized me now with an intense and sinister brilliancy as I smiled helplessly at the lady whose memory was better than my own.

"*Tiens!*" she laughed. "You don't remember me? Never mind! Some day I shall tell you. In the meantime you may call me Marcelle. I hope your studio stove burns better!"

I shrugged my shoulders helplessly in apology, forcing my memory to recall where I had seen that tall, graceful figure, its almost boyish symmetry asserting itself beneath her lace waist and trim walking skirt. Then I lowered my gaze to her feet, incased in a well-valleted pair of tan Oxford ties—American Oxford ties. Influence of the Quartier Latin! Ah, a glimmer of light! Yes, surely! Then, like a flash, the memory of my old friend Frémier crossed my brain. *Sapristi!* Frémier's model! My model—Marcelle!

We would have embraced like good comrades had I not again felt the eyes in ambush of Monsieur Villerocque.

"Ah! So it is zat zee time goes by!" sighed Marcelle, lapsing discreetly into her broken English that Villerocque might not understand. "Eight years, *mon Dieu!*"

Instinctively we drew apart from the rest, and a flood of memories came back to us both.

"And Frémier?" I ventured, as we reached the edge of the platform.

She gazed at the sand, and did not reply.

"I have not seen him in years," I added, "not since the time we used to feed you candy to keep you quiet in a pose."

The smile of the *gamine* returned—a *gamine* grown up, to be sure, but whose good heart was the same. She made

me a little sign, and we wisely turned back to the rest.

"My stove has a new top," I whispered rapidly, not any too sure we should find ourselves alone again. "At Twenty-two Rue des Deux Amies—you will come soon—to say *bonjour*?"

"Yes, my little one," she replied quickly. It was just like her—she, with her big heart—and turned with a laugh to Villeroque, who had wheeled on his heel, and stood watching in a sort of slumbering fury a colony of gulls below him quarreling over a heaving mass of seaweed charged with rotten food. I saw Marcelle rest her chin on his hard shoulder, her coral lips strained in a smile as he muttered something to her through his grizzled beard.

"Marcelle and I were at the same convent together," Madame Toupin started to confide, as Toupin slapped me soundly on the back.

"Eh, my old one!" he laughed heartily. "A good glass of vermuth before dinner, *hein*?"

And he shouted to his butler, who had suddenly appeared on the stoop of the villa.

"Ah, so you know Marcelle," continued Madame Toupin. "She is a good girl, Marcelle. *Une bonne fille, quoi*," she repeated, in an accent that again strangely reminded me of Montmartre, and its late cafés, especially the "*quoi*." "And you knew Frémier?" she added graciously, regaining her married voice.

"For years we used to lunch together daily," I declared, "at the Chien qui Danse—Marcelle, and he, and I—for two francs fifty; all we could eat, and of the best. The *patronne* is dead; it costs a gold piece to dine there now."

"Poor Frémier!" sighed my hostess, and raised the eyes of a nun to mine.

"Dead?" I asked anxiously.

"Married, my dear. Bah! That was stupid in Frémier."

"Poor Marcelle, she loved him," I added, with relief. "And the aged monsieur?" I ventured. "Ville—Ville—Ville—"

"Villeroque."

"What is he," I inquired, "when he is agreeable?"

"What—you do not know him? Very well, he is the famous Gaspard Villeroque. It is he who wins so successfully the big divorce cases in Paris—an old friend of Paul's."

"Eh!" cried Toupin. "Our vermuth!" as the yellow-waistcoated butler appeared with the tray. "You shall soon see my little niece—Lolotte. She is adorable, that infant."

The eyes of the nun became severe.

"Adorable!" roared Toupin bravely, and he whispered in my ear: "She has gone off with a young man to hunt for shells. Ah, an excellent fellow—young Jacques Latour. Lotte! Lotte!" he shouted lustily across the dunes.

There came in answer a faint halloo from beyond a distant bank of sand.

"*Et voilà!*" cried Toupin, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. "What did I tell you?" he said, turning to his wife. "You see, they are safe, my dearest."

The eyes of the nun flashed in reply.

"Lotte is nothing but a mere child," explained madame, with a look of ill-disguised disapproval. "You are quite crazy, Paul, to have let them go off alone. It is monstrous."

"*Eh, bien*, it is 'monstrous,'" laughed Toupin. "You see it is *monstrous*, my old one. *Et voilà!*" And he shrugged his shoulders and chuckled as Madame Toupin's anger rose.

"But since he is an excellent fellow —" I interposed, in the young man's behalf.

"Lotte is barely seventeen!" snapped madame. "A child! *Quoi*? Bah! All you men are alike. When I was seventeen, monsieur," and her voice sank to a murmur, "I can tell you I was not allowed to promenade with a young man alone."

"When you were seventeen," I thought to myself, as we gathered about the table in the summerhouse, and raised our glasses as the sun burned down to its rim back of a desert of molten copper, "when you were seventeen I am pretty firmly convinced you were telling the story of your life to

any young man you chanced to meet around the Place Blanche. *Penses tu?*"

There was a subtle philosophy in Toupin's immaterial gayety which I was just beginning to divine the reason of.

Villeroque stood at my elbow. He drained his glass in noisy gulps, setting it back methodically on the table, smacked his lips thrice, and cleared his grizzled throat while I lay about me for something to say to him—to break the ice, as it were, that lay between myself and this hard old man, whose grim talent had won a fortune in separating forever those who had once loved. Did he love Marcelle, I wondered, or had the vicissitudes of life forced my good Marcelle of old to put up with his boorish insolence? There emanated from this social executioner a personality born of relentless cruelty, of jealousy, and greed, keen-edged by a brain of lightning shrewdness and activity.

"The air is delicious to-night," I ventured, breaking the awkward silence between us.

"Ah! You find it so?" he grumbled, slowly turning his head and his glittering eyes to mine.

"Rare and stimulating," I continued, with courage. "No microbes here, eh?" I laughed. "No wonder that injections of common sea water have been discovered to be one of the most powerful stimulants known to prolong life in extreme cases of exhaustion."

"And lapse of memory," he snarled, with the vestige of a leer, the episode of my meeting with Marcelle still rankling within him.

"Memories of the heart, monsieur," I returned quietly, "are of all the most enduring."

There rose to the peculiar pallor of his leaden cheeks a little blood, that crept up and settled in the lobes of his coarse ears as the cool voice of a young girl made me turn.

She came up over the crest of the dunes, followed by none other than the prince himself—a young, clean-cut, sun-burned prince in knickerbockers, who by preference chose the tracks in the running sand her little feet had made, and graciously let her win the race.

And now he nimbly sprang before her, for his little princess was quite out of breath, and, putting out his hand, he pulled her easily up until she stood safe on the platform of the summerhouse, for she was slight, and nearly seventeen.

Then she blushed, which was quite as natural with her as breathing, and nodded a flustered little attempt at a bow, and brushed back from the pure oval of her face a stray wisp from her auburn hair that the sea breeze sent again across her clear brown eyes—eyes as soft and clear as her fresh young skin, which was as pink and white as a tea rose.

No wonder Toupin had declared she was "adorable." *She was*, and in contrast to her, the group of seasoned, worldly *débris* of humanity about the table seemed leathery, and old, and sodden.

"Hurry, my little sparrow," exclaimed Madame Toupin sweetly, though her dark eyes were drinking in the young man.

"A thousand pardons, dear madame," apologized Latour, "if we have kept you waiting! It was my fault, I assure you."

She laid her hand upon his arm.

"You are forgiven," she said, looking straight into his eyes, and for an instant I saw her dark lashes half close.

"We went nearly to the point," explained Lotte. She slipped shyly into a chair, still out of breath, brushing the dry sand from her white frock.

I could study her at my ease now—her childlike beauty, her delicate features in repose, and the sensitive, girlish mouth, whose innocent lips were rosier, and needed neither the crimson pomade of Madame Toupin nor the stick of coral of Marcelle's to heighten their color; and we were very soon the best of friends, and she told me eagerly how very far they had gone.

"You know the wreck?" she asked eagerly.

"Ah, no! I do not," I had to confess.

"But you know the mussel rocks?"

"Yes, yes—the mussel rocks I do."

"Well, a long, long way beyond that. And you know," she confided seriously, "it is quite dangerous, they say, on account of the quicksand." But went on that neither Monsieur Latour nor she had found any, happily, and that her feet were not as wet as they looked, for they had gone nearly all the way by the mussel rocks, at which the clever ears of Madame Toupin overheard, and she screamed for her maid, though young Latour and Marcelle assured her they were dry, at which Villeroque disagreed, and I with him.

"Nonsense!" roared Toupin. "At Lotte's age no one ever caught cold."

Yet, in spite of it, Thérèse, the maid, came running with dry shoes and stockings for mademoiselle. And Lotte put them on with the skill of unconscious innocence, much to Villeroque's interest as he glanced at her little feet, rosy with the chill of the sea, and as we continued to discuss the various dangers of quicksands, Lotte and I, and whether golf was hard to learn, and if I really thought to-morrow would rain.

I saw that this child's merriment was a veritable *tour de force*. Had I known fully then what was in her heart, and had the young man known! But he did not—how could he have known? They had been gone for two hours, and she had not dared during all that time to look frankly into his eyes, and he, in the good sense of his twenty-five years, had been timid in what he said, and still more careful in what he did, being a well-bred young Frenchman, and wise in his generation—at ease with the demimonde, and the personification of shyness and discretion before a pure young girl.

I had a right in liking young Latour; and Madame Toupin had not, for I had seen her eyes devour him, and she grew irritable as she refilled his glass of Porto under that strange nervousness of a woman in love who cleverly grasps every stolen chance to assert it, and suffers under the hopelessness of indifference.

If Latour saw it, not a gesture or a look of his revealed it. More likely he had only a vague inkling of the fact. It

is often thus that young men in the face of love are wholly unconscious of it. This indifference was torture to Madame Toupin. Despite her coolness before others, you saw the truth struggling about the corners of her tense, nervous mouth—tense now even when she smiled.

If Toupin saw it he ignored it—evidently Monsieur Jacques Latour was not the first young man Madame Toupin had fallen in love with. If it was plain enough to Villeroque he kept it shrewdly to himself, saving it, as he did a valuable point in a case until the moment came when he could launch it to advantage. As for Marcelle, she was too much of a *bonne fille* to have betrayed any one, much less an old comrade of her convent days.

Night was setting as we left the summerhouse and strolled back to the Villa Rose. Something in Villeroque's attitude made me let the rest go ahead. I turned slightly, and saw he was waiting for Lotte who had forgotten her shells. Presently she joined him. The night wind had sprung up, but evidently Villeroque had misjudged its direction, for I could hear his hard, low voice far clearer than he dreamed. His short remark to the little niece made me catch my breath.

"You are well taken, my little one," said he. "You are hopelessly in love."

Had he struck the child across the face he could not have been more brutal. Her lithe figure seemed to stop and sway for an instant. Then I saw the agonized look in her dear, brown eyes—a look of positive terror—and without a word to him she ran swiftly ahead of us into the Villa Rose, and slammed the door.

He might as well have said: "You are a criminal. There is nothing that can save you. You had better confess. I shall speak to the judge to give you a light sentence."

I believe I grew pale—I do not know; I only know that I felt the anger leap within me, and that with it came a peculiar chill and the rush of a sudden strength, strong enough to have strangled him; then I pulled myself together,

and passed up the ugly little stoop of the Villa Rose with its guests.

During dinner that night, Madame Toupin suffered from an "excruciating" headache, which won our sincere sympathy; and she smiled bravely, and said: "It is nothing, and will pass," while we ate heartily, and listened to the easy *argot* of Marcelle. Frank enough speech it was, too, for that good girl has a habit of saying anything that enters her blond head, and it was gay enough to-night to have satisfied any seasoned bohemian, and well larded with "*Pense tu's*" and "*Fiche moi à la pair!*" and similar indelicate exclamations from Montmartre, interrupted now and then by the common satire of Villerocque, whose acrid jokes Toupin, with his red napkin stuffed in the side of his neck to give his throat fair play, roared over, and young Latour submitted to with his best manners, though I saw him now and then wince to himself.

He should have known the Toupin household better; nothing that was said there ever surprised the butler or myself, and as for Lotte—well, a *jeune fille* who is permitted to come to table in France must accept the conversation as she finds it.

It was nearly ten o'clock when we finished dinner, and settled down over our cigarettes and coffee for a game of cards. Then up came the moon—silver, flooding the heavy sea with its mysterious light—and Madame Toupin's headache grew rapidly better. Skillfully and naturally she sent the little sparrow to bed, chose a fur wrap of gray squirrel, the same silver-gray as the beach in the moonlight, and, having appropriated young Latour, they went out together into the crisp air, away from the gaudy, stuffy little salon with its snapping cards.

In less than a quarter of an hour they were back, Latour enthusiastic over the beauty of Bel-Air in the moonlight, the hostess of the Villa Rose looking ten years older beneath a smile and a dab of rouge.

It was late when the genial laugh of my host, the grunts of Villerocque, as he grimly studied the hands dealt him,

and the good humor of Marcelle subsided, and we rose from the card table.

"Listen, my children!" announced Toupin, as he rattled the pack into its box. "To-morrow—ah, you shall see! Grand fête! Prodigious fête!" he chuckled. "My fête! We'll lunch at the Mère Thénard's, at Bonneville; she cooks a lobster that—ah, my dears—that is a lobster!" And he blew a kiss to the ceiling. "Then on to the Pavillion Doré for dinner. There is a piano—we shall dance. Tra! la! la! Eh, my little flirt? What say you, *hein?*?" And he began to waltz.

"That 'glues,' my old one!" exclaimed Marcelle, unconscious of the withering look of disapproval from her hostess.

"Charmed!" put in Latour.

Madame Toupin's small mouth closed tight.

"*Eh, bien*, my good one!" leered Villerocque, and shrugged his shoulders in acceptance.

As I passed up the varnished stairs to bed that night, I stopped to gaze out of a tiny window on the landing. Down by the white gate stood Cosette, thinking, in the moonlight, and I hoped and prayed the two automobiles would be in running order on the morrow.

I had hardly closed the door of my bedroom when a voice called my name from without. I opened my window.

"A letter for monsieur!" shouted a barefooted fisherboy.

"For me?"

"Yes, monsieur. The postman, Monsieur Jacquet, forgot to bring it. It is marked 'important.' Monsieur Jacquet is drunk, monsieur, at the hotel. Monsieur will understand, since Monsieur Jacquet is drunk!"

"Perfectly, my brave one, perfectly! Slip it under the door. I'll be down."

And I dropped him a ten-sou piece. He doffed his fishing cap, slipped the letter under the front door, and was gone in the moonlight.

A moment later I read the following from my friend Delacour, at the Cheval Blanc:

Come back at once. American here wants to buy one of your pictures. Sale looks certain, but he insists on your showing him

where it was painted or we would have turned the trick for you ourselves, as we need the money. Are doing our best to hold him until you get here.

"Hurrah!" I whispered.

I felt happy, and already rich. An American dropped from the sky—a miracle—a gilded dream. I mused, elated over this incredible piece of good news, for never in the history of the Cheval Blanc had its like happened before. Good old Delacour, and the rest!

I sprang up the varnished stairs, and rapped gently at Toupin's door to offer my excuses for the morrow.

Three days later, the car of a certain American, whom the crowd at the Cheval Blanc had held captive in return for his generosity, deposited me at the white gate of the Villa Rose. Not a soul was in sight. The summerhouse was deserted. They were gone, evidently, I thought, on some all-day fête. I trudged up through the sand, gained the ugly stoop, entered the Toupins' household by way of the deserted dining room, and caught sight of Marcelle and Toupin in the salon, talking earnestly together. So engrossed were they that they were unaware of my arrival.

"Eh, bien!" I cried. "I'm back!"

Marcelle looked up with a naïve smile, and moved toward me, with her hands outstretched to greet me. Toupin rose out of an armchair at the sound of my voice.

"Tiens!" he exclaimed, smiling, as he rose.

"What has happened?" I ventured, puzzled at their strangely subdued manner, for both seemed to have lost their usual breezy geniality.

Toupin lifted his arms in a gesture that indicated he had nothing to say.

"Happened, my little one! Oh! la! la!" began Marcelle, and likewise raised her hands.

"Marcelle will explain," exclaimed Toupin, and grinned.

"Listen, my little wolf!" began Marcelle. "It is fortunate, my rabbit, you were not here. Did you sell your picture?"

"Yes," said I. "But never mind that. Is anybody hurt? Ill? What the devil has happened? Where's madame?"

Marcelle pointed to the ceiling.

"In bed!"

"Nothing grave, I hope!"

"Ill, in bed!" she repeated, with the vestige of a smile.

"And Villerocque?"

"Gone! Ah! la! la! If you think he went pleasantly, *cet animal là!* In a fury! If you think it gay to argue seven hours with a brute like that, who never lets you explain anything. *Ah, zut, alors!* I've got enough of Villerocque. He's gone to Paris. All the better! He can stay there. It is good you did not remain. It would have given you a headache. That old bull roaring out his opinions, as if any one cared a sou for his *sacré* opinions. But when he began to attack that child, very well, I showed him my claws. *Parbleu!* It is not a sin to be in love, is it? It is not a reason because Lotte is seventeen that she cannot love."

Her voice rose vibrantly, Toupin letting her continue, with a shrug of approval.

"Very well, when one is seventeen one has a right to love whom they please. I began earlier than that—I did. Very well, it is done. I tell you, he could not frighten Latour. Latour told him to mind his own business! That if he had asked Lotte to marry him it was their affair, not his. And if he wanted to be further enlightened on the subject he would send his seconds to him any hour he wished. *Voilà!* That's what he told him. Latour is an excellent swordsman. Lotte is an orphan. Paul is her guardian—*ch, bien!* Paul gave his consent to their marriage."

"Bravo!" I cried, and wrung Toupin's hand.

"*Et voilà!*" chuckled Toupin. "It's done. Latour left this morning to tell his mother."

"Done!" he went on good-naturedly. "Why not? Latour is an excellent fellow, and he loves her. My wife is furious. Bah! Louise will get over it. It is not every day we can marry a little

niece, *parbleu!* Eh, my little flirt?" And he patted Marcelle's cheek.

"*Penses tu, my old one!*" replied Marcelle.

Madame Toupin did not appear at dinner. Lotte sat beside me, grave, happy, radiant, and twice she called him Jacques, quite as if she had always called him Jacques, and we filled our glasses to the little niece, and drank her health in the good wine, and embraced her on both cheeks—Toupin, and Marcelle, and I.

A year has passed. The Villa Rose is no longer Toupin's. Within a week after Lotte's engagement it stood stark and empty on the dunes, and a sign on the white gate read: "*Villa à Louer.*"

There had been an upheaval in the Toupin household. A domestic storm had raged within the Villa Rose, the like of which it had never experienced. It was the culmination of Madame Toupin's love affairs, as far as that indulgent philosopher Toupin was concerned. Madame Toupin must have lost her

head to have chosen the summerhouse for a rendezvous with a certain young lieutenant. It seems that Toupin chanced to pass at the very moment the moon shone clear of its scudding clouds, and he stood there quietly and saw them embrace—again and again.

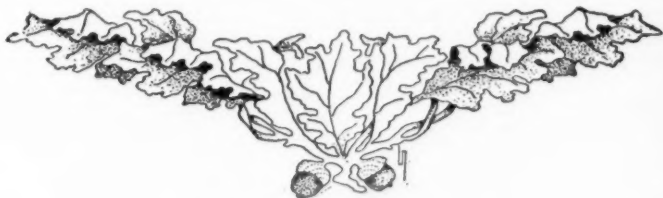
"*Et voilà!*" he chuckled to himself, and passed on.

It was the next day that the domestic storm broke, and Thérèse, the maid, began packing. The able Villerocque won his case with his usual masterful summing up, and the divorce was given in Toupin's favor.

Sapristi! Had Villerocque only known, but how could he have?

It was only the other day that I received the following:

Monsieur Auguste Toupin, director of the chamber of agriculture, has the honor to invite you to assist at the marriage of his son, Paul Hippolyte Toupin, ex-deputy officer of the Legion of Honor, with Made-moiselle Marcelle Valcourt, which will be held at Paris the third of October, nineteen-ten, at the mayoralty of the Sixteenth Arrondissement.



LOVE'S OFFERING

BELOVED, when the early morning sun
Beyond the night-encircled hills springs free,
And slowly creeping o'er the horizon
Wakes all the world to sudden ecstasy;
So did your love through darkness find a way,
And, shining on my unawakened heart,
Turn all my night into a glorious day,
Sweet miracle of love's most subtle art!
Now do I stand full flooded with your love
That in maturity becomes more sweet.
Dear love, there is no joy in heaven above
Nor gold on earth to lay beneath your feet.
And since no treasures rare my love may bring,
Take you this heart for my love's offering.

TORRANCE BENJAMIN.



Norval Richardson.

CHAPTER I.



READ her letter through at least three times.

It ran:

Why didn't you let me know, Jack, dear, that you had been ill? I did not know it until a few minutes ago when Dick's letter came and told me all about you. Do you think it was treating me quite right to keep me in such ignorance? I am writing now to give you strict orders, and if you don't obey—well—I won't say to what extent your punishment will be carried. First of all, pack your trunk, then get on a boat, and come straight down to Cuba. I have a charming villa here at Santiago, with a *patio* that will make you think you are in heaven; the air is deliciously balmy, and the view is inspiring. It is called Villa Boniato; a pretty name, isn't it?—until you know it means just sweet potato. I am going to remain here until March, and my invitation has no time limit. Will you come? Telegraph me yes. Don't let any one discourage you, for I have everything that will add to your comfort—a French cook who is a wonder, a new motor, and absolutely no friends. Doesn't it sound enticing? There is only one string tied to my invitation: that is, I absolutely forbid you to bore me to death by making love to me. As soon as you begin that, straight back home you will go. Be sure to wire me that you are coming. As always,

JANE.

When I had fully digested this letter, if such a thing were possible, I rang up Dick Sherrill, and asked him to dine with me that evening.

"I had a letter from Jane to-day," I told him when we were comfortably seated at a retired table at our club. "She is going to remain at Santiago de Cuba until March, and asks me to come down. I'm thinking of going."

"I had a letter from her, too, asking me to see that you went," he answered, smiling. "She also invited me."

"She did not tell me she had done that. Are you going?"

"Not until I have straightened out some work I have on hand. But if I were you, I'd go at once. It will do you all the good in the world."

"What do you think she is doing down there all this time? Is it attractive enough for such a long stay?"

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"You know Jane. One can never tell why she does a thing. She has her own reasons. When she left here a month ago, she said she'd be gone only a month."

"But she said she had a villa and had gone to housekeeping."

"Yes, in Santiago de Cuba. It does sound like a joke, doesn't it? Perhaps she has fallen in love with a Cuban."

At this we both went silent. It was possible—with Jane; and both Dick and I, being hopelessly in love with her, made it seem all the more probable.

"Dick," I said, moving the shaded candle so I could see him more distinctly, "do you think there will ever be any hope for us?"

"None in the least," came his matter-of-fact answer. "In fact, I don't think Jane will ever marry again. Once was enough for her. Indeed, why should she, with her unlimited income, as many men as she wants in love with her, and young enough to enjoy everything?"

"But that is just it; she is young

enough to have everything before her. She ought to marry. It is her duty."

"To you?" Dick laughed.

"To herself," I answered seriously.

At this Dick laughed boisterously.

"Well, old man, try to win her. I'm doing all I can. So far," sighing, "I'm as far from the goal as I was five years ago."

"Dick, just between us, what does she say to you when you ask her to marry you?"

Dick sat back in his chair and lit a cigarette.

"Each time, and for your edification I'll tell you there have been ten, she at first looks bored, then sighs, and in that restless, aggravating, fascinating way of hers tells me that she hates to hurt me, but that it is her duty to tell me the truth—that she loves another."

"She tells me the same thing," I answered anxiously. "Do you believe her?"

"Not for a moment. It is only her way of dismissing us and the subject."

"Then you think there is hope for us?"

"None in the least, and none for any one else so far—unless, as I said, she has fallen in love with a Cuban in Santiago."

"Then I'm going down to-morrow to find out."

I called the waiter and asked for several sailing lists; and by the end of dinner Dick and I had planned my trip—rather an indirect one, but one that appeared to me interesting and relieved of monotony. I was to go from New York to New Orleans, thence to Havana, and by train across the island to Santiago de Cuba.

As Dick left me at my apartment, he insisted that I should telegraph him immediately upon my arrival if Jane showed any symptoms of having fallen in love with a native.

"But I may be there about as soon as you," he added. "As soon as I can leave, I'll go down from here direct through Florida; so look for me any day."

"Don't hurry," I smiled. "I shall not miss your not being there."

"That's all very well for you, old man; but tropical countries have the reputation of developing sentiment; and if it happens that you are the only man around—that is, provided our suspected Cuban is not in the running—you might persuade Jane to commit herself."

"Don't be afraid," I laughed, as he took up his hat. "In her letter she said love-making was strictly forbidden."

So we parted, to meet again under the most extraordinary circumstances.

CHAPTER II.

At New Orleans, the balmy atmosphere, after the cold and slush of the East, strengthened me immediately; and by the day my boat was to sail I had forgotten entirely that only one week before I was convalescing from pneumonia.

The boat was to sail at half after three in the afternoon; and, as I was leaving the hotel, I noticed that a woman shrouded in black, who was getting in a cab directly in front of mine, gave the name of the same steamer I was taking. She was attended by a negro maid, and in the moment of waiting for my cab I heard some words pass between them in Spanish.

Several blocks from the dock my carriage came to a sudden halt. Looking out, I saw that one of the rear wheels of the carriage directly in front of mine had come off, and let the body of the vehicle down in the street. Springing out, I got up to it in time to assist the woman in black out of the disabled cab. She thanked me in a low voice, and then turned to the coachman. It was evidently a hopeless case. I insisted that my cab was at her disposal.

"But I cannot accept that of you," she answered, the black veil hiding her features entirely from my view. "Yet my boat sails in half an hour, and it seems there is no other in sight."

She looked helplessly up and down the deserted street.

"We are going to the same steamer," I replied, "and I assure you I shall be delighted to assist you."

"To the same steamer!" she ex-

claimed; and I noticed that she turned quickly toward her maid. "How did you know?"

"It was very simple," I smiled reassuringly. "I heard you give the direction to the coachman at the hotel."

"Ah, I see." Her voice spoke an unusual relief for such a trivial circumstance, I thought. "Then, if you will be so kind, I shall take advantage of your assistance."

So I assisted her and her maid into my cab, and took the seat beside her.

There is always something interesting about a woman gowned in black, particularly if her face is so veiled that one cannot tell whether she is merely good-looking or unusually pretty. Then the possibility of her situation being one of recently acquired freedom enhanced the charm. Added to this uncertainty, the soft, liquid tones of her voice, with just enough accent to show some foreign influence; a perfectly fitting black gown that displayed a girlishly rounded figure; and the slight fragrance of an odd perfume; all caught my attention, and projected my thoughts to the anticipation of three days on board ship with the interest of such a companion.

I ventured a few remarks on the way to the dock, but she answered only in monosyllables; sweet enough, spoken in her gentle way, yet hardly conducive to conversation. Once on board the boat, she and her maid disappeared immediately, and I went in search of my stateroom.

By sunset we had passed out of the jetties and were sailing into the Gulf of Mexico, a world of amethyst and saffron at that hour. Strolling along the deck, and finding none of the passengers sufficiently interesting looking to begin a conversation with, I had stopped at the stern of the boat, and was watching the distant strip of land growing vaguer each moment, when I heard a step near me, and, looking up, found her standing beside me.

"I want to thank you for assisting me so much to-day. In my nervousness in getting settled on the boat, I think I forgot to thank you."

She held out her hand—very soft and

cool it was, too—and then drew it away timidly. For a moment I was surprised into silence, not expecting to see her so soon, nor having divined through her heavy black veil her exceptional appearance. She had lovely black eyes, the blue-black of the Spanish race; and, set as they were in the milky pallor of her skin, they seemed to gain an intensity of expression that was both brilliant to a certain hardness and magnetic through the gentleness of long lashes. Her hair was the same deep black, over which she was then wearing a black lace mantilla. Her neck, perfectly rounded and white, showed charmingly through the square-cut collar of her gown, and was encircled by a band of black velvet, clasped in front with a pin of black onyx and pearls.

"It was nothing," I managed to answer at last. "I was only too happy to help you."

"And it meant so much to me, as this is my first trip alone. One always feels so—so unsafe without one's family."

She turned away a little sadly and leaned on the rail. With the soft breeze I caught the fragrance of the unfamiliar perfume. I was puzzled as I looked at her to decide how young she might be, for her figure suggested the development of a woman, yet her manner was girlish, almost timid.

"You are going to Havana?" I asked, after a slight pause.

"No—to Santiago de Cuba. It is my first trip there since I left as a little girl."

"Ah, then we are bound for the same place."

"You, too, are going there!" she exclaimed, opening her eyes wide and looking at me with an expression that was searching. "Then," she hurried on, as if regretting her surprise, "perhaps you can tell me if this boat will get to Havana in time for me to take the morning train out?"

Before she had finished, the dinner gong rang, and we parted, I assuring her that I would get the information she wanted from the captain and tell her after dinner.

That night I found her tucked away

in a steamer rug, her negro maid sitting close beside her.

"The night is too beautiful for you to sit here," I said, going up to her. "Won't you come out on the for'd deck? We are sailing directly into the path of the moon now. I am sure you would enjoy the view from the prow."

She spoke to her maid before replying, and then rose from her chair and stood beside me, explaining that she had sent for a heavier scarf.

I found a place for her on one of the large anchors, where she sank down and draped a heavy crêpe shawl carefully about her, letting the long fringe flow idly through her fingers. I sat down near her, asked her permission to smoke, lit my pipe, and then looked up at her as she stared straight out before her, her face strangely pale in the strong, white moonlight.

We were silent a long time, the gentle lashing of the waves against the prow of the boat, the subdued rattle of the rigging, the steady puffs of the engine, all blending with the penetrating intensity of the purple night. She looked steadily ahead of her, and I, following her glance, thought of the land that lay before us, and the one there whom I loved so deeply and so hopelessly. Finally I looked up, and saw her eyes bent on me seriously.

"It is a wonderful night," she said, almost in a whisper.

"Too beautiful, almost, to break its spell by speaking—unless——"

"Yes, unless——"

"Unless one spoke of more than trivial subjects."

"Trivial subjects! I don't quite understand."

"I mean the things people talk about when they first meet—books they have read, other people, impersonal things."

"But what else could they talk about?"

"For instance—themselves."

She laughed softly, and draped the shawl in a different way about her; then she settled back more comfortably.

"Then you should begin—as it is your suggestion. Tell me who you are,

and why you are going to Santiago de Cuba."

"I meant you, though. There is nothing interesting to tell about myself. I am from New York, Dutch ancestors, lawyer by profession, the possessor of thirty-nine wasted years. That is all. It's not interesting, is it?"

She was watching me closely.

"But you have left out the most interesting part of your story."

"No; I have told you all."

"You mean there has been no romance?"

"None at all."

She sighed disappointedly; and, looking at her, I thought she was surely not older than sixteen.

"Think of living thirty-nine long years and not having been in love."

"I did not say that."

"You said there had been no romance."

"Yes—but love without consummation is not romance; it is only dreariness."

"Is not that your fault?"

"How do you mean?"

"Have you tried hard enough, long enough, constantly enough?"

I shook my head sadly.

"You don't know Jane."

She clapped her hands like a little girl.

"Oh, her name is Jane. How funny!"

At this I grew haughty.

"You think Jane is a funny name? I think it very beautiful."

"Oh, pardon me, I do, too. It is so American."

"And, pray, what is yours?"

"Mine is Pilar—my father calls me Pilarcita." Then quickly: "But tell me more about Miss Jane."

"She is a Mrs."

"Married! Oh, how sad for you!"

"She is a widow now."

"Oh, then she is free. You still have a chance."

All through these questions she was shifting her shawl and pulling it to and fro across her shoulders, leaning toward me with interest, again sitting back as she pondered over my answers. Altogether, surrounded, as we were, by

the beautiful night and discussing a subject that was nearest my heart, I found her entirely fascinating.

"Tell me more about Mrs. Jane. What is the color of her eyes?"

"Deep brown, with a tinge of claret."

"And her hair?"

"Red. She calls it auburn."

"Is she fat?"

"Heavens, no! Jane is slender and trim, almost boyishly thin. That rhymes, doesn't it? You see how sentimental I am!"

She had retired now into one of her thoughtful attitudes. It was a long time before she spoke.

"Such a woman as she must be will make it as difficult as possible to win her. Do you think she loves you?"

"I am sure she does not."

"Why are you sure?"

"She has refused me at least a dozen times."

"And has accepted no one else?"

I was finding her questions really interesting.

"No."

"Then her refusing you means nothing. She is only sure of you, and wants to keep you waiting. All women are like that."

I laughed, relit my pipe, and shifted to a more comfortable position.

"Tell me," I said between puffs, "how old are you? You must be one hundred from your philosophy."

She laughed easily and surveyed the moon.

"Your case is very simple. It always takes a woman to find out a woman. Now, I wager you have never made Jane jealous."

"How could I—when I love only her?"

"Yes; but perhaps subterfuge is necessary. Have you ever tried being attentive to other women?"

"No," I answered decidedly; "that would be too boring."

"If the result were the winning of Jane, wouldn't you be willing to try it for a while?"

"Perhaps," thoughtfully, "if I were sure that she, Jane, would not throw me over entirely."

"Of course, you would have to risk that."

Suddenly she drew herself up, and stood shifting the *crêpe shawl* again and preparing to go in.

"You are not going yet?" I exclaimed, springing up. "It's very early, and, besides, the conversation has been so one-sided. You know all about me, and I know nothing of you."

She met my eyes seriously, almost sadly.

"There is nothing much for me to tell. I have been in a convent in New Orleans for six years. Now I am going back to my father and my home in Cuba."

"I'm sure there is a great deal more to tell."

Her eyes met mine with an expression almost startling in its directness.

"What do you mean by that?"

I took a step back from her, and smiled easily.

"Nothing to alarm you, I'm sure. Only you forget the romance, too."

She looked out across the moon-flooded sea, then slowly back at me.

"Perhaps you will know that before our acquaintance is ended."

Then she went swiftly down the deck and into the cabin.

CHAPTER III.

The next morning she did not appear, nor the next evening; in fact, it was not until we were in the harbor at Havana that she came out on deck shrouded in the black veil as before. I went up to her and held out my hand, which she took lightly.

"I missed you yesterday," I said. "And now our trip is ended."

"You are not going direct to Santiago de Cuba?"

"Yes, I leave on the train to-night."

"Ah, then I shall see you to-morrow. It is a twenty-four-hour trip, you know. Thank you again for your assistance—and good-by until later."

She turned away from me hastily, a little nervously, I thought, as the customs and health officers came aboard the boat. I saw her again as we were

having our baggage examined on the wharf, and I noticed a man, evidently a Cuban, small and dark, and wearing a short beard, standing close behind her. She seemed to be unconscious of his presence until, in directing the inspector to remove a tray from her trunk, she looked up suddenly, started, lifted her veil for a second only, and gave the man a quick, meaning glance. Immediately he went off, and a few seconds later she and her maid went out of the customhouse and took a cab.

I spent the day in wandering about Havana, impatiently attempting to while away the time until the nine-o'clock train should whirl me on toward Jane. At the station that night, I saw Pilarcita enter the sleeper and go directly to her berth. When I entered the car, she had retired and pulled the curtains tight.

The next morning I got off at a little station for breakfast, and found her negro maid buying a cup of coffee to take into the car to her. When I went back, I saw she was sitting at the far end of the car, with the black veil readjusted so that I should not have known her except for the familiar costume.

As I approached, she made a place for me to sit beside her.

"It is a long, tiresome trip," she said. "All day long. I wonder if you are as impatient as I. But, then, I get to my destination before you."

"You have changed your plan? You are not going to Santiago?"

"Oh, yes; only my father's home is a little this side of the city, in the mountains. I get off at the little place called Dos Bocas."

"I am sure you can't be more impatient than I," I said, after a slight pause. "I have been counting the hours ever since I left New York."

"You mean to get back to her?" she asked, with her delightful, low laugh.

"No; to get to Santiago. She is there."

She started, and turned toward me.

"You didn't tell me that! What is she doing there?"

"Spending the winter months in a

villa she has rented in the suburbs of Santiago."

"Do you know exactly where?"

"She calls it Villa Boniato. I believe it is on the slope of a near-by mountain."

"Villa Boniato! Villa Boniato!" she exclaimed, looking at me intently through the thick veil.

"Yes. Do you know the place?"

"I remember it distinctly," she answered, more easily, sitting back in the seat. "I did not know any one was living there now. How long has she had it?"

"About two months, I think. Tell me something about it."

She was looking out of the window indifferently now, and did not answer me for several moments.

"It has quite a history. I have forgotten the details. But she will like it immensely, I'm sure. It is a beautiful place."

Just then I noticed she looked up quickly, and as I followed her glance I saw the man who had watched her at the wharf pass along the aisle. No look of recognition was exchanged between them, although the man looked directly at her. When he was gone, she turned to me.

"It is very disagreeable the way men stare in Cuba. But tell me, how long are you going to be in Santiago?"

We talked on for an hour or more, while she told me quaint customs of the country that she had remembered from her childhood spent there, and the changes that had taken place since the American intervention. It seemed that her father had sent her away before the war, and had left her in a convent in New Orleans for the past six years. Her information appeared unlimited, and particularly her knowledge of the conditions of Cuba before and after the Americans had arrived. It was a continual surprise to me to find a young girl so thoroughly en rapport with the politics and economics of the country.

At the luncheon station she remained in the car, while her maid went out, as before, to buy some refreshment for her.

That afternoon I handed her a paper I had bought the day before in Havana, printed in English, in which was an account of a brigand who had been committing some daring robberies in the vicinity of Santiago.

"It seems that you are going into a rather desperate neighborhood," I said laughingly, calling her attention to the article. "At least, it may make our trip more picturesque."

She read the article hastily before replying.

"But they say that the rural guards think they have the man—this brigand—pretty well surrounded. I wonder if that is true. It is rather unpleasant to think of driving ten miles at night with the prospect of meeting him, isn't it?"

"Is that what you must do?"

"Yes; but I was only joking. Of course, my father will meet me." She looked at me, smiling. "I am not the least bit afraid." Then more seriously: "I wonder if Mrs. Jane is frightened. The Villa Boniato is quite in the region of the bandits."

"Perhaps that is why Jane chose the place," I laughed. "She lives on excitement."

"You describe her as very interesting. I should love to meet her."

"Nothing is easier, I'm sure. Won't you come to see her?"

"If it is possible, I should be very glad to."

It was growing toward evening; and, when the short twilight faded and night came on with a rush, she rose to make her preparations for getting off the train. We arrived at Dos Bocas about half-past eight, and I went out on the platform with her. No one but the station master was in sight, and I wondered if she were not alarmed at not being met by her father; but she assured me that she would wait in a little *fonda* a short distance from the station until her father came. She was certain he would come for her.

"Good-by." We clasped hands. "I am sure we shall meet again, and as soon as possible I shall come to see your friend and welcome her to Cuba. No—don't worry about my being left here

alone. I am not the least afraid. Good-by."

I saw her walk across the platform followed by her maid. The train began to move, and, as I boarded it, the man I had noticed twice before pushed past me coming out of the car, and jumped off.

An hour later the train drew into Santiago de Cuba.

CHAPTER IV.

Jane met me at the station, in an outrageous, flaming-red motor coat that matched the brilliant color of her car, which waited near the platform.

"Heavens, but I'm glad to see you!" She held out both hands. "But why in the world did you come by rail? There's a fairly decent boat from Havana here, and the trip would have been the very thing for an invalid. You never could do things right, could you, Jack, dear?"

"At least I have better taste than to wear a conspicuous coat like that."

"Dear boy, don't worry about my coat. You never knew whether a thing was really good or not. We are near the sun down here, and one has to go in for strong color. Please notice my footman. Isn't he a wonder? Doesn't speak a word of English."

We were getting into the car now, assisted by a man of huge proportions, with a twirling black mustache and impudent eyes.

"Where did you find him?" I asked, as he took his seat beside the chauffeur and we started off.

"Here in Santiago. He is fresh from Spain, and plays the part of cook, footman, interpreter, and everything else that comes up. I call him Don Juan to keep up the local color."

"He looks as if he might reflect credit on the name."

"I don't know about that. I never look into the morals of my servants—my own give me enough trouble. But I am glad to see you. How I have yearned for you down here!" She put one hand on mine with her aggravating air of camaraderie.

"Are you really glad I have come?"

"Of course. I wouldn't have asked you if I hadn't wanted you."

Jane has a most successful way of taking the sentiment out of any situation.

We passed out of the narrow streets of Santiago, and began to climb a wide road that wound in and out through dense, tropical foliage, and through which, in the brilliant moonlight, we caught vistas of mountains piled up against the deep purple heavens. The air was balmy and fresh, and the whole world seemed mellowed and quieted into the perfect night.

"So far it is heavenly, Jane. I don't blame you for staying here."

"But wait," she said enthusiastically; "wait till you see my villa. And in the meantime tell me all about home folk. Has Carrie Devan got her divorce? How is Dick? Is he coming down here? Where are the Brewsters? Oh, you know, anything. I'm just dying for some gossip."

It seemed to me out of place to discuss such trivialities on such a night, but with Jane there was no use trying to change the subject; in fact, to be at all comfortable with her, one must be subservient and quiescent, or the situation would at once become strained. At least that has always been my experience.

Up and up the road we went, getting now and then glimpses of the valley, which gradually unrolled beneath us till it lay like a map displayed in the moonlight. Finally we stopped at a high wall built directly at the side of the road.

Jane opened the door, and sprang out before I could assist her.

"Well, here we are," she cried.

"Not this blank wall surely, Jane; it seems to be the most deserted place in the world."

"Just wait, please," she answered, raising a huge knocker on a heavy wooden gate that sent an alarming report into the quiet night.

It was opened promptly, and we entered a garden, dense with foliage and heavy with fragrance. Lights twinkled a little distance down the walk, and the

one-story white house gleamed a welcome. We entered through a wide door into a spacious room, marble-floored, with tall windows, and farther on to a *patio*, where a fountain plashed amid royal palms that lifted their slim trunks high above the roof. Lanterns, hung between heavy white columns, threw a subdued light upon comfortable willow furniture, and blended without obtruding upon the moonlight that shone resplendently upon the palms.

"Now, hurry, and dress for dinner," Jane broke in upon my enthusiasm. "I'll give you just fifteen minutes to get ready in. You won't meet Miss Williams this evening. She is my companion, or chaperon—whatever you wish to call her. She finds the climate conveniently debilitating when she knows she'd be de trop."

"Nevertheless, I'm glad you have a chaperon," I replied, knowing Jane's opposition to convention.

"Never you fear for me," she threw back as she ran to dress for dinner.

We dined at a little table placed on a terrace, whence the whole valley and the town and bay of Santiago swam below us in indigo transparency. It was all too wonderful to describe; and, sitting there with Jane opposite me, smoking a cigarette, and with long pauses in our conversation, I thought I had never been so happy before. I told her so, and she answered me, with her mocking smile:

"I'm happy, too. I generally am with you, Jack."

"Then let us be happy this way always."

She stifled a yawn.

"Now, you are going to begin. Goodness me, I thought I had told you that was forbidden!"

I threw away my cigarette impatiently.

"If I were sure there was no one else——"

"Seriously, Jack, there is no one else. I love you all too well to want to marry any of you."

"But will you be happy this way—always?"

"*Quién sabe?* as the Cubans say.

There's plenty of time to find out in. I'm only thirty, I'm wealthy enough to have what I want, and I'm happy. Why rush into matrimony again unless I find a man that can't live without me?"

"Oh, then that is what you want?"

"Yes. You, and Dick, and all the others—for you know there are several—all of you think I am a good fellow, a pleasant sort of companion, not too boring, and all that. I know how you feel about it. But that is not what I want. I want a man who would be willing to risk his life for me."

"How is one to do a thing like that these days? The opportunity would never arrive."

"Who knows? *Quién sabe?* It may."

"I wish it might come to me very soon."

She opened her fan and leaned back in her chair, tantalizingly attractive.

"You know, Jack, it seems to me you are getting very close to making love to me."

It is strange how women invariably lead a man on and on, only to find the limit of his endurance, I suppose. With Jane it was a passion. Looking at her at that moment, and knowing that she knew fully how attractive she was, and enjoyed seeing my love for her that I could not keep from showing, I suddenly remembered my traveling companion's advice. Why not make her jealous? It was ridiculous to try such a game with Jane; yet, angry with her, out of patience with her, desperately in love with her, I found myself foolish enough to attempt planning how to do it. I forced myself to look away, lit a cigarette indifferently, and inhaled the smoke slowly.

"No, I haven't the slightest idea of making love to you, Jane. I was only talking to pass away the time. To be perfectly frank with you, I've fallen in love with another woman."

She broke into a merry laugh.

"How delightful! Now I shall enjoy your visit. Do tell me about her."

Her acceptance of my story drove me on further than I had expected.

"I met her on the trip here. First on the steamer, then on the train. She is

really beautiful, Jane; a Cuban girl who has been in the States for six years. She has wonderful black hair and eyes, and creamy complexion; and her voice—I wish you could have heard her talk. She was really fascinating."

"I'm sure she sounds so."

"And she used an odd sort of perfume. You ought to get some like it. And she wore a piece of black velvet around her neck with an old brooch pinned to it."

Jane picked up her fan lazily.

"She traveled that way?"

"On that boat; yes."

"Well, she must have been either a frump or an adventuress."

"No, she was neither; she was adorable, and only eighteen."

"What was her name?"

"Pilarcita."

"H'm! Where does she live?"

"Near here. She got off at Dos Bocas."

"Really? Then you will be quite near her."

"Yes; we have planned all sorts of jaunts together."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and she said she would come over to see you as soon as possible."

"How very kind of her." Jane rose slowly and walked to the edge of the terrace. "I hope I shall get a telegram from Dick to-morrow saying he will come. It seems that it is going to be rather lonely for me."

"Why, Jane?"

"Because, if you have become so enamored of this—this Pilarcita—the way she pronounced the name made me chuckle against my better judgment—"I suppose you will be with her most of the time."

I rose and followed her.

"Jane, seriously, you don't mind. I knew you had grown tired of me, and there was no use of my going on waiting hopelessly all my life." I found myself really getting serious. "So the best thing for me to do is to find some one else. Don't you agree with me?"

She turned and looked me straight in the eyes for a full moment, and then laughed easily.

"Jack, dear boy, do you think you can fool me? You know this is all a made-up story."

"All right." I shrugged my shoulders. "Wait until you see Pilarcita. Then you'll believe me."

"I'm quite willing, you silly boy. Now let's go in. I'm going to show you all over the battlefield to-morrow."

"Indeed you're not. I'm going to stay right in the *patio*, and loaf to my heart's content."

The next morning, though, Jane insisted on drawing me out in the broiling sun to see San Juan Hill, and a whole lot of boring places that she had studied up on with the usual enthusiasm of an American tourist. I wonder if Americans will ever learn to travel, and simply enjoy places without trying to find out everything about them.

"If you insist on my going sight-seeing, Jane, I'm going to hunt up Pilarcita immediately," I said, as the car turned out of Santiago and started climbing the mountain.

"Suppose we go to see her this afternoon," Jane replied, with alacrity.

"No. I think I should wait until she gets rested from her trip."

"But you might leave your card. Where does she live?"

"Somewhere near Dos Bocas, she told me."

Jane broke into a merry laugh.

"You are an ideal lover—not even to know where she lives."

"Surely we could find her, though."

"What was her last name?"

"She didn't tell me that."

"Ah, Jack, you are a poor liar. Do you think we could find her by driving over these mountains and merely asking for Pilarcita? I wager there are a thousand near here by that name."

"But not like her. There is only one."

When we reached the Villa Boniato, there was a telegram from Dick saying he would arrive the next day. We were alone again at dinner that evening, Miss Williams still being conveniently indisposed. As we sat on the terrace with our coffee and cigarettes, I wondered how much longer I could keep going the

little game I was playing. That Jane did not believe one word of it I was perfectly sure.

During one of our long silences, the knocker on the gate gave a loud report. I jumped unconsciously, and Jane looked up, startled.

"I wonder what it can be," she said. "I never have callers at night." Then she added gayly: "Perhaps it's Pilarcita come to look you up."

Don Juan entered, and handed Jane a crumpled note. I heard him tell her, in very good French, that he had found it at the gate, but that no one was in sight when he got there.

"Why, it's for you, Jack. How curious!"

I reached for the note, and tore it open impatiently.

It ran:

DEAR MR. SHELTON: Can you come to my assistance? My father did not meet me at the station, and I took a *volante* to go to my home, and have fallen into the hands of some bandits. I can see Villa Boniato from where I am. It is directly beneath this camp, to the south. This will help you to find where I am. You are an American, and can have some influence in Santiago. Will you get a party to come in search of me? I fear almost anything. I'm throwing this note down into the road which passes just beneath where I am, in hopes that it will reach you.

PILARCITA.

I handed the note to Jane.

"What had I better do?" I cried excitedly.

"Another joke, Jack. Do you think I believe you have not arranged all this to fool me?"

I found myself actually getting angry with Jane.

"Consider what you please," I said. "I want you to let me have your car to get into town as soon as possible. I'm going to the police department, and then in search of this girl."

Jane was serious enough now.

"You mean it is not a joke?"

"I was never more serious in my life."

For a moment Jane looked undecided.

"But you can't go to-night; it's absurd. Besides, Gualberto Martinez is near here now, the most desperate

bandit in Cuba. It would be taking your life in your hands."

"Listen to me, Jane. Would you want me to refuse to go to your aid in such a case?"

"But you don't know but what it is some trick to get you out. I said she was an adventuress all along."

"I think I have lived long enough to know the difference between an adventuress and a young girl. Will you lend me your car, or shall I go on foot?"

Jane stamped her foot and turned away impatiently. However, I saw her go in search of Don Juan, and return in a few moments.

"The car will be ready immediately. I think when you get to town they will discourage you sufficiently. You've evidently lost your mind."

"Perhaps so. But I know I'm doing right."

She followed me to the gate. Don Juan and the chauffeur were already waiting in the road.

"Good-by, Jane. You see, I was not joking, after all."

She met my smile seriously, and refused my outstretched hand.

"I see that you have lost your mind completely. Good-by."

I heard her close the gate and bar it as we started down the road.

CHAPTER V.

We raced into Santiago, and stopped at a house which bore the sign *Policia*, where we aroused some sleeping officials, who refused, point-blank, on learning my request, to do anything before morning. It was then about ten o'clock.

I turned back in exasperation, and consulted Don Juan and the chauffeur, who was an American. Both of them seemed in favor of doing what they could; and, after a little planning and the promise of a handsome reward, I persuaded them to go with me in the direction Pilarcita had indicated. Both of them were armed; and, as the chauffeur had driven Jane all over the adjacent country, he told me he knew exactly where the spot must be, stating

there was only one road in the direction of Dos Bocas that passed under a high ledge of rock which must correspond to the one indicated in the note I had received. So off we went in that direction.

When several miles of racing through the calm night had somewhat cooled my impatience, I began to realize the impossible feat we were trying to accomplish; indeed, the absurdity of being in a foreign country and trying to rescue a girl from what were acknowledged to be desperate bandits came over me with a rush. I had about decided to postpone the adventure until morning, when I should have the proper assistance, when the chauffeur turned to me and indicated the road ahead.

"If I am not mistaken, that is the point we are making for."

I looked ahead, and on either side of the road, shining distinctly in the moonlight, two ominous-looking mountains rolled together, and left a narrow valley, through which the road passed. As we neared the place, I saw that the road appeared to have been cut through a wall of rock that rose to perhaps a hundred feet on each side. The chauffeur insisted that it was the only place where one could have dropped a piece of paper into the road. To make his statement more convincing, he pointed out to me Villa Boniato, which could be distinctly seen toward the southeast.

When we were well within the cut-out road, we stopped the car to consult what best to do; and, before I knew what had happened, I was lying face forward in the middle of the road. Another minute, I felt my arms and legs being bound, and then I was lifted by some men and carried to one side of the road. The shock of the fall must have made me unconscious for a while, for when I opened my eyes again, I was lying on the ground in a place I had never seen before, a circle of men about me, and some tents near by glowing white in the moonlight. After a while I tried to rise, but fell back from weakness, but not before I had seen Don Juan and the chauffeur in the same condition a little way from me.

"What does it all mean?" I asked them.

"Only that they have us now, instead of our having them," answered the chauffeur.

"Ask them what they want with us," I said to Don Juan.

"I have, and they said to wait until morning."

I looked up to the sky, and saw that the moon was toward the west. With nothing to do but wait, I shut my eyes and tried to doze, punctuating each waking moment with a good round of audible oaths.

Morning finally came, and with it Pilarcita; I saw her come out of a tent and run toward me. She knelt down beside me, and the trouble in her eyes made me glad that I had come.

"Did they hurt you? How dreadful!"

"I don't think I'm seriously hurt." I tried to smile. "But I should like to have my arms and legs untied, if it isn't against the law here."

She called to one of the bandits, a real comic-opera-looking chap in a broad-brimmed straw hat and a bright-colored blouse. At her direction he cut the ropes that bound me, and I once more felt the delicious freedom of stretching.

"Why did you come alone?" she began, in a low voice. "I thought you would surely bring the rural guard."

"They wouldn't come till morning, so I came only with the two men I had."

"But now—it is worse than if you had not come at all. They will keep you here, too. It is all too dreadful. If I had only not written."

"There must be some way to get away from them. Have they treated you badly?"

"No; I don't understand. They have given me every comfort; but they will tell me nothing."

Just then a more picturesque character than any of the others—in all there seemed about thirty—came toward us.

"This is Gualberto Martinez," Pilarcita whispered; "the chief of the band."

I struggled to my feet and bowed

gravely. He answered me with an elaborate flourish.

"Won't you ask him what he wants with us?" I said to Pilarcita. "Ask him if it is money, or what."

She turned to him, and spoke a few words in Spanish. He replied volubly, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

"He says he is not at liberty to say yet."

"And how long does he want to keep us here?"

"He won't say that, either."

"Oh, very well. All we can do, I suppose, is to be resigned. Is that cook over there going to give me some coffee?"

I referred to two men who had built a fire, and who were evidently preparing some sort of a repast. In a few minutes they had placed a rough table near one of the tents, and one of them came to Pilarcita, and called her attention to it. At her suggestion I went to the table with her, and there we found very good coffee and bread.

I sent Don Juan and the chauffeur coffee, and when they felt somewhat revived we had a short consultation as to what was best to do.

"I feel sure my friend will come in search of us," I said to Pilarcita, who still sat at the table.

"You mean Mrs. Jane?" I caught just the slightest twinkle of a smile in her eyes.

"Yes. She has your note. She ought to be able to make out the direction as well as I did."

"You think she will come at once?"

"I do—and with my friend, who arrives to-day. He will be of some assistance, I hope."

"Another one of her suitors?"

"Yes; exactly."

"So then you are going to wait for them?"

"I know of nothing better to do."

I glanced around again to take in our surroundings. Beyond the camp circle, the slope on which we stood slanted off abruptly into a valley of palms; to one side was the sheer precipice that led to the road, and back of us the mountain

rose. The spot was well chosen for protection and for observation, for the surrounding country lay in full view, and yet the camp was not visible from the part traversed by the road. The circle of men had separated after the coffee had been passed around; and, although we had been left seemingly free, from every little shrub or rock the muzzle of a gun shone ominously. Our freedom was only the confines of the camp.

Pilarcita retired to her tent, the two men and I sat down to enjoy a quiet, hardly happy, smoke, and the day wore on. After luncheon—a repast of soup, beans, and a sort of stewed meat—we smoked again until the late afternoon came; and we wondered if the rescue party would not come before night.

Just as the sky was growing brilliant, Pilarcita came out of her tent, and beckoned to me. I followed her a little way from the camp to the edge of the slope, where we sat down.

"I wonder if she will come for you?" she said, after a long pause, looking at me with her half-veiled smile.

"I think so. Indeed, I'm sure of it."

"Will it not be a confession if she does?"

"A confession of what?"

"That she loves you."

I couldn't help laughing at her ingenuousness.

"No; it will be only a question of duty with her. I am her friend. She would naturally think she should go to my assistance, just as I came to yours."

She leaned back and looked across the wide view to where we could see Villa Boniato glowing in the sunset—a white spot in an emerald setting.

"I hope I shall see her. I will be certain then to know what she thinks of you."

Suddenly we heard voices loud in conversation, and then the sound of footsteps near us. Looking up, we saw Jane standing before us. For a second we all stared at each other in amazement.

"Jane," I exclaimed at last, "where on earth did you fall from?"

She did not answer me at first, looking all the time at Pilarcita with an in-

tentness that I should have thought the other would have found embarrassing. However, it was quite the other way. Pilarcita's eyes did not move once. Finally Jane spoke.

"I am sorry I disturbed you," she said to me icily. "I thought something had happened to you, but I see now."

She turned away quickly.

"Jane, stop! What do you mean? Something has happened. We are here as prisoners. Are we free now?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Ask your friend there," with a toss of the head toward Pilarcita.

"But how did you get here?"

"I came in a hired motor, with Dick and two officials, who fell off the car as soon as they saw a gun pointed at them."

"Is Dick here?"

"Yes; he's back there," indicating the camp.

"What are you going to do?"

"Go back to Boniato. I see perfectly well you don't need my assistance."

She turned and walked back to the camp circle. I followed, Pilarcita close beside me, and found Dick enjoying the situation immensely. We clasped hands, and were in the midst of questions when Jane interrupted us.

"If you are ready, Dick, we will go now."

"Are they going to let you and your innamorata go free?" Dick said to me.

"They can decide that question better between themselves," Jane cut in, going toward the path that led to the road.

In a second, six men barred her passage. She turned back and faced Pilarcita.

"Will you be kind enough to ask your friends what they mean by stopping me?"

Pilarcita went to one of the bandits, and conversed with him a long time in Spanish, then she turned to Jane.

"He says you cannot return; that you will have to remain here."

Dick gave a loud laugh, but no one else joined him in it.

Jane looked at her with a brilliant light in her eyes.

"How absurd! Tell them that I am

an American, and accustomed to going where I please."

"I have explained everything to them. They are too desperate a lot to care. Please don't attempt to go. Something awful might happen."

"You think you can frighten me? Indeed, I am going just as I came. Tell them that, please."

She turned toward the path again. I ran to her side.

"Jane, be sensible. You aren't at home. These are desperate men, with no law except their own desires. We are bound to be rescued soon. Have patience and wait. If anything should happen, I have only myself to blame. God knows I regret it enough already."

"Regret what?"

"That I brought you into this."

"Oh, don't worry. I can manage that for myself."

"You won't go, then."

"Yes; I'm going now."

"Then I shall go with you."

"You—why? She is not coming."

"My place is beside you, not beside her."

She looked at me thoughtfully.

"Jack—go back to her—and be happy."

I bit my lips angrily.

"Are you ready to go?"

"Yes."

"Then let us start."

We walked straight down the path and into the row of bayonets that pointed toward us. Back of us rang out a loud command in Spanish. Neither Jane nor I took any notice of it. Again came the voice, and then a loud report that sounded as if the mountains crushed together. The next moment my right arm fell limp to my side, and I stumbled forward blindly, and dropped into the path.

When I opened my eyes I was in a tent, stretched out on a mat, with Jane sitting beside me. For a second we looked at each other without a word; then she leaned closer to me, so that our faces were very near together.

"Jack, dear, the opportunity came, after all, didn't it?"

Then she leaned forward and kissed me. After that I went unconscious again.

CHAPTER VI.

We were taking dinner with Dick just after our return from our honeymoon in France one year later, and talking over our comic-opera experience in Cuba. There had never been any satisfactory solution of any part of the affair, for the next day after I was shot, when the rural guard had at last come to our rescue, the whole camp, including tents, and bandits, and Pilarcita, had disappeared like mist before the sun, leaving no trace behind them. Returning to Villa Boniato, we found that it had been pillaged during Jane's absence, Miss Williams, Jane's companion, locked in her room, while everything of any value whatever had been carted away, including some jewels Jane had brought there with her. The whole affair, with my illness incident to the wound I had received, made us all decide to get back home as soon as possible. After that had come our marriage and voyage to Europe. So that, in a measure, the affair had lost some of its keen interest.

After dinner Dick took us into his den, and, unlocking his desk, pulled out a roll of newspapers. Opening one, he showed me a large cut of a woman.

"Why, it's Pilarcita!" I gasped.

"Yes; and here is the story of her life."

"Wasn't she an adventuress?" Jane exclaimed. "Please tell me I was not mistaken."

"Indeed you were mistaken," Dick continued, with great amusement. "She was the perfectly good wife of Gualberto Martinez. In fact, they say she managed his most daring escapades."

"You mean she planned robbing me?" Jane cried. "I didn't credit her with that."

"There's no doubt about it."

"Well, I don't care," I said, lighting a cigar and smiling at them both. "I shall always be deeply grateful to her."

Jane met my smile. She understood. Dick never did.

The THINGS THEY VALUED



AS Felton stepped from the taxicab, he glanced up at the ornate apartment house. Edith had chosen it for her home, and he believed in the outward expression as indicative of the inward soul. He knew instinctively that she would have selected just such an one, founded as it was upon a meretricious design and compassing an imitation grandeur. Built of cold, gray-green bricks, it was much trimmed with white. It had peaked dormer windows jutting from a fussy-looking roof, trivial little balconies, oriel windows, cut-offs, and projections. It smelled of paint and varnish, and was not only glaringly new, but stridently, jarringly ugly. The corners of Felton's mouth drew in sharply.

The entrance was fair, and as he walked up the broad steps he noted that two very smart shops flanked it on either side; the kind of shops which proclaim that the wayfaring man though a fool need not expect anything here but a cold stare unless he comes wearing the outward evidence of money, and plenty of it. The man at the door admitting Felton to the hall was only potentially supercilious, while the bay trees were dustless, and the huge Spanish chairs on either side imposing; the elevator men and telephone boy were in spotless green uniforms, and the sleek, dark manager sitting at a desk in an obscured corner showed patently the fact that he was a reformed detective.

Felton's manner when he chose was impressive. He threw open his furlined coat, and, taking his card from its case, held it in his hand; he had no intention of preparing his wife for his visit.

"Mrs. Felton's and Mrs. Wardner's apartment; Mrs. Wardner's brother," he said authoritatively, and, as he stood waiting to be announced, he heard the outer door open and heavy footsteps across the costly rugs.

Regardless of Felton's prior claim, and just at his elbow, a man demanded, in the husky whisper that belongs to a loud, throaty voice, to be announced at the same apartment.

"Please go up," the telephone boy spoke collectively, and Felton, turning, saw that there were two men.

He had a bowing acquaintance with both of them, which he did not press into service, as he preceded them into the elevator; but they, considering him with that impersonally impertinent stare that the materially prosperous bestow on all strangers, recognized him, not only with surprise, he noted grimly, but with something of emotion, especially Seabury, a pale, colorless man of no definite personality, the typical hanger-on of some one, generally the man or woman just at hand. He was unable to control a shocked alarm from expressing itself in his face.

The larger, more aggressive man, however, after an almost imperceptible indecision, laughed the full laugh of

those who eat and drink much, and uttered a note of welcome as he put out a fat, puffy hand.

Parsons was sleek and blond, and wore a fresh gardenia in his coat. He stepped like a huge cat, a beast of the jungle. Most men wanted to murder Parsons on sight. Women felt so after they had known him a while and had had some experience with him.

"Mr. Felton?" he asked, with ingratiating curiosity and a nicely balanced surprise. "Didn't know that you were in this part of the world. Thought you were in South Africa or some other black country," he laughed.

"No, I'm here, as you see," Felton responded indifferently, nodding coldly to Seabury.

As the elevator stopped at the floor, Felton stepped back to allow the two men to precede him into the apartment and the large room at the end of the hall, apparently filled with guests. As they went farther into the room and among the guests there, Felton stood in the doorway casting observing and comprehensive glances about him; a tall, dark man with a thin, lined face and weary eyes, he looked like a dark shadow there.

People—people, men and women, were all about. There were a glare of light, the sound of the piano at a rag-time trot and bang, and a voice, a rather good one, singing a light, catchy song. Felton had just come from the sea, from the country, from a prolonged wrestle with a man's dreams and problems, a man's obligations and duties. He had been where the snow swept the atmosphere clean and cold and pure; he had lived under the stars. He had been torn between opposing forces of life, and been swept out of his moorings into a sea of emotion, and this—this tinsel, this imitation of life, this blare and glare filled him with disgust, but he waited a moment. He wanted something, and he was there to get it if he could. Waves of smothering, cloying perfume—mingled perfumes, coarse and heavy—were wafted to him; they filled him with a sense of nausea. How could Edith—how could any one—

Felton remembered that his wife's use of scents was rather elemental, barbaric even. He recalled that she kept sachets—heliotrope sachets—just under the sheets on the beds in her home, and that once when a guest had stayed overnight with them he came down to breakfast the next morning white and wan, and, when pressed to explain his dejected condition, had confessed that he was susceptible to odors, and had not slept the night before by reason of scented sheets. Felton remembered with what a struggle he had been able to secure a small room for himself where scents were barred. Edith's room was always heavy with them, and filled with a confusing lot of—junk, he called it. Space seemed to frighten Edith, and fresh air was not a necessity.

Parsons, when he entered the room, had made, by a circuitous route, his way toward Mrs. Felton, with that cat grin on his face and his jungle gait. He leaned down, and whispered over her back into her ear. Felton's fingers closed on each other involuntarily, his face paled, and he drew a quick breath, but his wife, at that whisper, wheeled swiftly, and looked toward the door with narrowed eyes. Felton could not see the slightest ray of feeling, or surprise, or indeed any emotion in her face. He might have spoken to her an hour before.

"Hello, Dick!" she called gayly, her voice at concert pitch—there was always something common in Edith's way of greeting a guest. "Where did you come from?" She held out her hand a trifle absently across the space between them, as she spoke to a newcomer. "Come and say howdy," she urged in that light, high, excited voice which the socially unfit can never tone down to the notes of sophistication.

Her gown, also, demanded attention; it was a brilliant green, very décolleté, and was veiled with pink; it made more pronounced Edith Felton's very yellow hair, her hard, cold face, and round, brown eyes, glittering not with welcome, but the other thing.

Felton nodded with a somber smile. He did not move from his stand at the

door. He did not intend to speak to her in that crowd, nor with Parsons standing just there at her elbow; and when Mrs. Wardner, in a frock which palely imitated Edith's, in a manner so exactly the counterpart of her sister's, though lacking the exuberance, and in a voice which always trailed off into a whine, came up and held out a stiffly unresponsive hand to him in greeting, Felton stooped down and said to her in a low voice:

"Tell Edith that I want to speak to her, and at once."

Edith paid little attention to Clare's whispered summons; yet, after a few moments and in a roundabout way, she did come up and stand beside her husband.

"Good heavens, Dick," she said irritably, "why are you standing here looking like a gravestone? Come in and make yourself agreeable, if you can."

"I've been wondering what explanation you could make to me of this."

He threw his hand out toward the rooms descriptively. His eyes shone, glittered; his face was the color of old ivory.

She laughed a shrill, affected little laugh.

"You left me and went traveling."

"At your suggestion and by your advice," he assented.

"Well"—she laughed again that shrill, affected laugh that had in it a touch of light scorn—"you certainly did not dream that I was going to stay in that—forsaken hole, mourning for you? Not I. I'm alive, and we live only once, and I want to live while I'm at it, live to the limit, get all there is to get, enjoy all there is to enjoy—and I came to this place where I could get it. I'm going to have a good time for once in my life. I've spent some pretty dark winters heretofore."

A good time! Oh, bitter and specious phrase! Does any one ever have a good time except in anticipation?

"A good time!" he sneered. "Is there a room here," looking about him, "where you and I can talk?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I have guests," she replied coldly,

shortly, "and I am not anxious to exhibit you in hysterics for their benefit; to-morrow—"

"To-night," he said forcefully, definitely, positively, even roughly.

"After they go, then," she consented.

She had not often braved that tone or ignored it.

"Give me a room and get me out of this," he urged somberly.

Felton went into the smaller of the two sitting rooms that his wife had indicated, and looked about him curiously. This was his wife's home, the belongings of which had been in his home the last time that he saw them. Those pictures on the walls he had bought; these were his rugs; that the old mahogany of his mother's; through the door he could see in the dining room his father's old family silver, all of them old family possessions that had been used to furnish the house that Edith's father had builded for them when they were married. He had left her in that home, mistress of those things, with the implied understanding that she was to stay there until he came back from South Africa, and here she was in a city far distant, a city apartment, among a set of people who excited his instinctive disapproval, a shallow lot of parasites bent on having a good time.

A good time! Felton shivered. He rubbed his hand across the fringing edges of his hair to wipe away the dew of perspiration.

He felt as if he were passing, without volition, through some dream of horror, presenting a phantasmagoria as thin and unsubstantial as air, but which pressed upon him with sinister force; an atmosphere that he was compelled to breathe, yet which he knew was poisonous, exhaustive of life, and from which he saw no escape.

He knew now that his marriage had been a vaporous dream; that he had been walking alone through a desert, a gray, formless desert that had scared and burned his hopes and withered his heart, and that his wife, his home, all, had been a mirage—a trick of the desert. No—not all of it. There was one thing that he had brought out of

the desert—one thing that was his—little Dick. The blood flowed back into his face, his eyes shone with a tender, beautiful light. Suddenly he stood up, and took a long breath of thankfulness. Nothing else mattered.

He had been sitting there alone an hour. The rooms were now thinning out. People were going home or on to some other place. Here and there men and women had taken to the card tables, and were playing bridge. Felton stood beside the table in the smaller room, and looked out into the other. He seemed to have aged perceptibly since he had entered those rooms, and his lined face grew hard, cold, even fierce. He looked like a man attacked by highwaymen, who has backed up against a wall, forced to fight, not for himself, but for what he holds as a sacred trust. The amber electrolier cast brown shadows on his dark face, and deepened it into the hard tints of bronze. He walked over slowly, and surveyed that thinning crowd of revelers, and—waited.

Edith floated up to him again; her eyes were shining with excitement, but they were even harder, rounder, and browner than they had been when she first greeted him.

"You'll frighten these people if you stand there and glower, as you are doing."

She laughed a shallow, tinkling laugh that had not one hint of mirth in it.

"I'd like to have you explain it all to me," Felton said slowly. "I left you in one place, and six weeks after I come home again, and I find you here."

"There is no explanation," she assured him again, "but just what you see. I got tired. I sold the house—I had a right to—it was mine." There was a note of defiance in her voice. "Rather I have rented it with a sale in view. It was mine."

"So it was," agreed Felton slowly, deeply; "so it was. Given you when you married me. The things in it I gave you as my wife, even—even"—Felton's voice shook—"even little Dick, and where is he now?"

Edith looked at him disdainfully.

"Dick," she said crisply, "there is just one thing that must be cast overboard in sailing for success in life, and that's sentiment. You always have loaded yourself down too heavily. I've learned the foolishness of that, if you have not. A short life and a merry one is good enough creed for me. The things in the house were mine. Why should you object—you do object, or you would not be questioning me this way—why should you object to my selling my house, or renting it, when I have a good chance to make some money? Besides, women to-day don't sit in moated granges mourning for recreant husbands off on wild-goose chases. They turn in and amuse themselves.

"I grew tired of the life I was leading—the life I had been leading for the past five years, more or less. I made a change. I have my own income, and it's larger than the one you gave me. It's sufficient for one, but not for two. If you can't keep out of business involvements and disaster, I can. I've heard nothing but economy and things gone wrong for five years—we have been married seven. I made the proposal that you should go to South Africa, and look after those investments that you had made there, and which you said were worth something. You consented. That was your way, you took it. I took mine. We agreed to be independent of each other for one year. Here I am." She was as clear, hard, and cold as nails, her voice as toneless and unemotional. "What are you going to do about it?" she asked coolly.

"Nothing," he answered, after a long time, during which he had looked steadily, ponderingly at her. "And little Dick," he said, his voice suddenly grown hoarse, tense, "what explanation—"

"I put him in school."

"He's so young," he pleaded. "He is not quite six."

Felton's eyes burned; his voice was stern, accusing.

"Heaven!" she cried impatiently. "What are you fussing about? You know that I do not care for one thing but having a good time—I have acute

*remembrances of the other thing. I want plenty of money, decent clothes—how do you like this gown? Rather fine, isn't it? Though I paid a lot more for it than it was worth. And jewels—I love them." She was wearing some magnificent gems. "I love all that you call the froth of life—what I call the cream and——" Her face broke in sudden fury, she grew scarlet, her hands moved convulsively. "I'm tired of skimmed milk—that's all you've offered me for a number of years. I'm tired of it all."

"And of me?" The voice showed no eagerness; it sounded dead, lifeless.

"Well——" She smiled up lazily, provokingly at him. "Yes, if you put it that way. I'm tired of what you stand for—failure."

"Suppose, then, we make a division of things," Felton's voice trembled, shook; his face was ghastly white. "A division of the things we care for, or about which we have a sentiment—that sentiment which you deplore—and each go our way. I couldn't stand this life that you have here; but there are some things belonging to us two that I value, that I cherish."

"Very well," she interrupted crisply, "what are they?"

"I have some jewels," Felton spoke coldly.

"You mean you did have," she laughed. "I've had them set." She touched some rings and some jeweled ornaments with her finger.

"They were my personal property," he said sternly.

"You always did care more for your old diamonds, and emeralds, and pearls than you did for me," she jeered.

"Oh, no," Felton replied dryly, "but it was my fancy to be an expert in precious stones. It was my diversion. I like to study values in gems and—people; to get the real, never the fictitious. I've never been fooled but once." He spoke very quietly, even gently.

"Well, I liked those stones, and I had them set to suit me. I don't think I care to give them up," she said, with a slow smile.

"You had no right to them; you took

them from my private box, the key of which I left in your care, a trust with you."

"What's mine is my wife's, what's my wife's is her own," that's the text of chivalry." She smiled, secure in her ability to get and keep anything she desired.

"But I choose to claim my—jewels," he said slowly.

"Toss a penny for them," she cried carelessly, indifferently. She knew he would do nothing of the kind, and she would keep them.

"We will not," he said sharply.

"Very well—do as you please; but I'll keep the jewels, or"—her face brightened with a hint of malice—"suppose we make it a game of bridge. They're waiting for us in there. I want you to come and make a fourth at a table with me."

She knew that he hated cards, as a rule, though he played with men, and well, as he did most things; but cards were only a diversion to him, not a social business, and he broke out explosively at her suggestion.

"I will not," he said shortly, a sudden fury sweeping over his face; then, with the memory of that thing he wanted, he took a sudden step toward her. "Edith," he said, "Edith"—his voice low, tense—"what about little Dick?" There was yearning in his words.

"I put him in school, as I told you. He was being utterly spoiled at home, and becoming a nuisance. I don't intend him to grow up to be a Molly. He's got to make his own way in life, and I intend him to be a successful man, a man to get all there is in life, and keep it, too. The sooner he gets out among other boys and learns to fight his way, the better—that's my creed about boys."

"Have you heard from him lately?"

"Certainly. The head master, a most worthy man, sends me a weekly report of him. He's doing well, and will do better, as soon as he understands that he is going to stay there, and settles down."

Felton took a long look at her; his mouth was set, strained. Edith started

to the door, just as Parsons appeared there.

"We're waiting for you to come and play," he called gayly. "Can't you come and help us out?"

Felton took a quick step toward his wife, and caught her hand to draw her back into the room.

"Look at me," he said, but she drew away from him coldly. "Look at me!" he thundered. "Did you mean that you would put the things that I value at the toss of a penny?"

"A game of bridge," she corrected, a faint, amused, disdainful smile upon her lips. "Certainly, I meant it." She nodded her head affirmatively.

Felton's eyes narrowed.

"Then," he said slowly, "then—I'll play with you—one rubber. And if I lose—" His brows contracted. "If I lose, I'll give you the jewels; but if I win"—the slow voice exulted—"I'll reserve the right to the jewels—and the choice of anything else which belongs now, or ever did belong, to you and me."

"Very well," she said indifferently. "Only come on. I've stayed here talking to you until it has become a scandal."

She laughed lightly as she left the room. Felton nodded slowly.

"Who plays?" he asked a trifle harshly.

His wife indicated Parsons and Seabury.

"And I'll play with you, Jimmie," she said, nodding to Parsons, "since you're the best player, and I couldn't have my husband for a partner; we have a stake up." She smiled amusedly.

Felton bowed ceremoniously to Seabury, and they sat down at the table.

"Auction bridge?" he asked.

They all nodded affirmatively, and Edith secured the deal in the draw, and she and Parsons won the first game of the rubber.

There was a tense excitement about both of them which the other two could not fail to observe when Felton and Seabury won the second game, but on the rubber game Edith's spirits rose to excitement when, with a score of twen-

ty-four to nothing in her favor, it was her deal again. Her hands shook, but her face wore a half-conscious smile of achieved success. She was certain now of her game, and had already, she felt, won the stake.

No one could have found a trace of expression on Felton's face; it was blank still; only the brows were slightly drawn together. The other two men, a little in the dark, were watchful, keen, alert.

Mrs. Felton held ace, ten, eight of hearts; king, queen, knave, nine of clubs; queen, ten, nine of diamonds; nine, seven, six of spades; she bid "one no trump."

Felton, second hand, held knave, nine of hearts; ace, four, five of clubs; ace, six, three of diamonds; and ace, king, queen, knave, eight of spades and bid "two hearts." He was uncertain at first just what to do, considering his wife's bid. He held seven tricks in his hand, and he hesitated a second whether to double. If he passed, he was certain to win the odd trick, and fifty points, but Felton was playing for more than that at this stage of the game, and he knew that his opponents would endeavor to make game.

Parsons, third player, had the suit of hearts twice stopped, and could give Edith other assistance. He held king, queen, six of hearts; ten, eight, six, three of clubs; king, knave, seven, two of diamonds; and five, four of spades. He bid "two no trumps."

Seabury, fourth player, holding seven, five, four, three, two of hearts; seven, two of clubs; eight, five, four of diamonds; and ten, three, two of spades, said "No." He was leaving the play to Felton. He had to.

On the second round, Edith refused to bid, and Felton now, without a second's hesitation, doubled Parsons' bid, designed to assist Edith. Parsons said "No" on the second round, as did also Seabury. On the third round, Edith, her eyes snapping, refused, rather resentfully, but she sat up straight in her chair quickly, intending evidently to contest the game for all that her hand was worth.

It was Felton's dummy, and also, since she was the original declarant, Felton's lead. When he had finished and won his game, and counted the score, he threw out his hand. "No more," he said; "I only intended to play a rubber—we understood so. Edith," he said crisply, "I've got to go, and I want to speak to you before I do so."

There was something in the tones which commanded her, and she rose resignedly, and followed him to the small sitting room, and sank down in a chair. "You've won," she acknowledged acridly. "You've won."

She began to strip her fingers of a number of rings, to take from her bodice other jewels with pronounced vindictiveness.

"Don't you want to know something of my plans, Edith?" Felton asked.

"Frankly," she said, looking up at him coldly, "I do not. I have told you that I am tired of the life we led. I'm enjoying myself here."

"And to secure that you were willing to give me my choice of anything that I called mine—or anything that we held in common?"

"Yes," she replied, looking levelly at him. "Yes." She had lost; her eyes were colder, harder, more vindictive than her voice. "Take the things that you value." She laid the jeweled ornaments and rings on the table.

He made no move to touch them, but threw his hand out toward them as he said: "Edith." His voice was low, even soft—he was remembering little Dick. Some day Dick might reproach him if he had not made every effort to reach her. "Edith, you can keep them. Everything I have is yours if you will leave this, and I can give you now——"

"I will not." She sat up in her chair, her eyes blazing. "I will not!"

"But I have something to tell you. When I got to England, I found that I could sell my interest in South Africa, but at a loss; that if I went there I could doubtless profit in more ways than one, at least it was promised me by the men in England who were anx-

ious to have me go; but—after I had been there a month—I got a letter from little Dick—a printed thing—misspelled and blotted with ink and tears—begging me to come back and take him home again." Felton's voice shook, his eyes burned, glistened. "I sold out that night, and took the next steamer home."

"Oh!" Edith stamped her foot petulantly. "Just like you! You're about as practical as a chicken!"

"But, Edith, I have other chances now. Luck has turned at last."

"Dick," she interrupted coldly, "I've heard that story for the last five years—always the same old story—always the same." She spoke disdainfully. "Take your jewels!" She flung her hand out indifferently. "And stick to your bargain. Come back successful, able to give me what I want, what I ask!"—she laughed—"and we'll talk matters over."

"No, we won't," Felton said quietly. "You can have the rings and things." He pushed them toward her. "They are valueless to me now. There's only one thing that has been ours that I really value, and that's—little Dick. I've made my choice. I'll take little Dick. I went up to his school, and found him white, thin, listless, homesick—poor little boy! I took him away. He's with me now." Felton's voice was as cold as ice and as stern as fate. "I'll keep little Dick with me hereafter."

Edith's eyes widened—she caught her breath sharply for a moment. Somewhere deep down in her the elemental woman struggled, demanding, crying for expression, but she crushed it back.

"Very well," she said, putting up her hand as if she would yawn, but it was a poor effort.

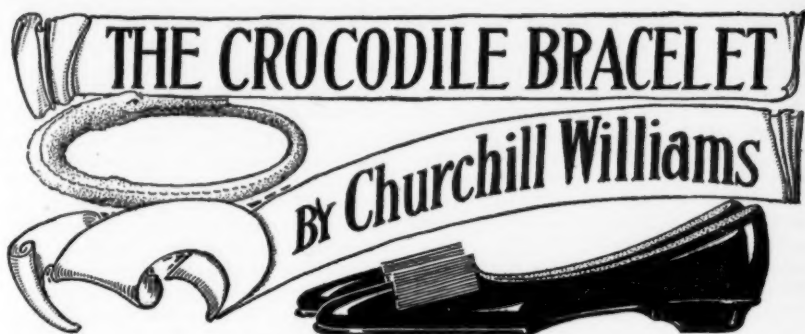
Then she rose, and turned to the room where Parsons and her sister were talking in low tones, waiting for her. The jewels sparkled and gleamed on the table.

"Little Dick and I are going to work it out together," Felton said slowly.

He left her standing by the table where the gems glittered and sparkled like fierce, mocking eyes. He shut the door between them.

THE CROCODILE BRACELET

By Churchill Williams



A GOOD memory for faces is one of the assets in my business; and, as soon as my eyes rested upon the tall, slender, gray-haired man who sat beside Mr. James in his private office, in the fashionable jewelry house of R. F. James & Co., I recalled him and the place and occasion of our meeting. His name was Crane, and he had been one of the party at a wedding supper before which, on an evening two years earlier, I had performed a lucky bit of legerdemain. At one stroke on that evening, I had been able to restore to its owner a very valuable ruby; and to manage this recovery so as not to involve the unhappy woman who had taken it in a spasm of irresponsibility and covetousness. The circumstances surrounding my operations on that evening, as indeed the circumstances usually prevailing in the case of the trained and efficient private detective, were such as to preclude publicity; and the fact that anything unusual had then happened, so far as I am aware, remains known to this day only to the guests at the table, to me, and to my employers.

On the minds of the six persons with whom I spent that tense hour, the part I played probably is impressed indelibly. But, though their recollection of me is tinged with gratitude for the deliverance which I effected, the conditions of our meeting, as well as the differences in our social station, would lead them to

avoid me, unless in pressing need of my services. So, as soon as I saw who was in Mr. James' company, I said to myself: "This is something more than playing watchdog to a lot of wedding gifts." And was accordingly pleased. Sitting hour after hour in an inconspicuous corner, while a parade of gushing women and bored men passes before tables laden with silverware, fine linen, and a miscellaneous collection of clocks and bric-a-brac, is my almost daily task, and is monotonous to the point of extinction. Particularly is this so when, as in my case, a college education and a taste for adventure encourage a private belief in one's ability to do something more inspiring, if not more remunerative.

Mr. Crane almost immediately confirmed my conjecture regarding his errand. As he arose, his outstretched hand met mine with the heartiness of a person who, up to his chin in icy water, recognizes a rescuer. And he began to tell me his story as soon as we were seated.

"I come from Stonyshore, twenty-eight miles from here," he said. "That is my country house; and something very perplexing and unpleasant happened there night before last; or, rather, between noon yesterday and eleven o'clock of that evening. We have been having a house party of six, not counting my wife and myself—all people whom we know fairly well. Yesterday at noon my wife missed a bracelet. It

was a gift from her father, of dull gold in the form of a crocodile curled on itself. It was made in India, for some rajah, I believe, an unusual piece. She had laid it upon her bureau when we retired on Saturday. She happened first to miss it shortly before midday yesterday. We have looked everywhere for it—turned the place upside down, and have found no trace of it. The house was not broken into; nothing else is gone; the servants we have had in our employ for several years, and they have had many opportunities to take more costly and more easily converted valuables. I have not a suspicion, not a shred of clew to offer you. But the bracelet is gone, and it must be found."

He whipped out his handkerchief and wiped his face. Plainly he was in deep distress; and I guessed the real reason.

"It is not, then, because the bracelet means so much to you?" I asked.

"Damn the bracelet!" he ejaculated. "It did cost a lot of money, I suppose; and it would bring now a good deal more than my wife's father paid for it. But neither Mrs. Crane nor I would worry over that if——"

"If no one else did?"

"Exactly. Leaving out the servants, there are, at this minute, six persons in my house—my guests—not one of whom, as I very well know, has left it, or will leave it, until this trouble is cleared up. Nobody has said anything of that sort. It don't have to be said. Everybody understands. The thing started innocently enough. Like a fool, I let myself be discovered looking for the bracelet. After that there was nothing to it but organized search. By nightfall every one was laughing over it outwardly, and inwardly cursing the day he or she came into the house. We began as a week-end party. Unless something turns up, we're likely to become a week-on-week party, and a very weak party at that."

A skeleton smile advertised an attempt at fun that, in reality, was an explosion of overstrained nerves. Then he leaned forward and laid a hand on my knee.

"You must come up with me at once, Mr. Cuthbert, and find that bracelet. If you don't, something's going to break loose."

I looked at Mr. James. He nodded.

"I'll do my best," I answered. "But you must understand this: You came for me, I imagine, because I had the good luck to be successful once before when you were present. You mustn't build too much on that incident. You know the sort of work for which I am usually engaged. It is quite different from what you ask me to undertake. A dozen other men ought to be able to do better what you want done."

"You're the only man I want, the only man I know of that I would bring into a thing of this kind," he replied. "For there mustn't be any more embarrassment to my guests, and there mustn't be any talk. Besides, my guests have heard of you from me, and they expect you and no one else. And—well, that's about all. Shall we start?"

Two hours later Mr. Crane and I alighted at the door of his home at Stonyshore, a long, brick house, nestled in English ivy and set in sloping lawns shaded with chestnut trees of considerable age. I was shown at once to my room. Mr. Crane, at my suggestion, went to tell his guests I had arrived, and to ask them on no account to volunteer theories. It was my notion that enough of these already were afloat or awaiting introduction in the household to keep me running out blind clews for a long while, unless, from the start, I could shut my ears to them and be allowed to put my own explanation together, piece by piece, as fast as the facts came freshly to my hand.

By the time I had changed my clothes the gong announced dinner, and at almost the same moment Mr. Crane knocked on my door. I forestalled his question.

"If I may, I will, for to-night, eat in my own room," I said. "If I come down on all your people at once, I will only put your table under constraint. By luncheon hour to-morrow, I believe your guests will be more at ease in my

company. In any event, I would like a little time alone to fix my bearings."

He acquiesced readily enough, and shortly a man brought a tray to my room. From the moment he entered, I understood that he knew who I was and my business in the home. By some wireless system, news of that kind, it seems, communicates itself belowstairs instantaneously. For the same reason there are few more useful allies than an honest and experienced servant once you make him feel that you acquit him and those in whom he believes. So I told this man, who, I learned, was Tarrant, the second butler, and in Mr. Crane's service for six years, that I was starting my investigation with the idea that the bracelet had been mislaid, not stolen; and that to find it I might have to rely on the help he and his fellow servants could give me because of their familiarity with the daily routine and habits of the household.

"Ten to one," I said, "we will finally come upon the bracelet just where it was pushed, or dropped, or covered up, somehow. And the minute that happens, every one is going to wonder why he didn't think of looking there before. All of you have done your best, I am sure."

"There's not one of us would take a thing in this house that didn't belong to us, sir," he answered, looking me squarely in the face.

"I believe you, Tarrant," I said. "And that will do."

As a matter of fact, into my present calculations the idea of theft did not enter. Indeed, I had no theory of my own as yet. It has always seemed to me, as I have tried to indicate, a mistake to start with theory; but I was minded first to follow up the most likely, because most common, explanation of similar "mysteries." A systematic hunt for something that is lost implicates no one. It helps to clear the air if it accomplishes nothing else. And while one hunt already had been made, another would do no harm.

Earnestness and honesty, as I long ago discovered, are not the only things needed to discover what is missing; and,

failing a more likely plan, I promised myself, some time the next day, to direct a search of the household which should bring to light the most minute speck of dust. But my talk with the butler had done what I wished. He left the room, as I perceived, very much more at his ease than when he entered; and somehow I felt assured that his respectful request to be allowed to help me in my work was made in behalf of every servant beneath the roof.

The first part of that evening I spent in my room, doing nothing more useful, I must admit, than casting up the circumstances of this problem and reading the evening paper which Tarrant fetched me. About nine-thirty I received an invitation from Mr. Crane to join the gentlemen in the billiard room. The ladies, it seemed, had agreed on early retirement; the men, I surmised, were curious to have me before them. I went down to them with a realization that seeing them and talking with them at least would give me a chance to confirm my lack of suspicion in one direction. I accomplished little more than this, unless it were to discover Mr. Crane had an agreeable taste in cigars.

The gentlemen had drawn into a semicircle, with a chair conspicuously vacant at the middle, facing a fire of logs. I did what was expected of me, took this seat, and entered, as heartily as was in me, upon the rôle of middle man reversed. For, as soon as Mr. Crane had broken the ice with a diplomatic reference to the situation, they fell upon me with questions—to not one of which I was able, for sufficient reasons, to give a definite answer. When they had exhausted their pack they sat with legs outstretched, smoking and staring at the flames, each and every one of them so obviously determined to stick it out lest his withdrawal be the signal for some one else to loose a shaft of suspicion at the departing back that the thing verged on the comic.

The mood gave me, however, a good chance to study their faces, and ten minutes' observation was enough to satisfy me that, from the cherubic countenance of Effingham, the pink-and-white, plump

banker, at one end of the line, to the long-nosed, spade-bearded visage of Bard, the rich ironmaster, who sat at the other, there was not a feature among them to which I could point, and say: "There is guilt!"

In short, here were four men, each one of whom, however elastic the code by which his business had made him more than comfortably rich, the instant he left his office probably abode strictly by the golden rule. Prosperous, well fed, well dressed, and well mannered as they were, the idea of associating with them the acquisition of a bracelet by other means than its proper purchase over the counter, and payment for the same at the month's end, seemed, as I had expected, hardly worth a second thought.

So far as motive went then, it had come down, as inference dictated from the start, to the ladies of the household and to the servants. In my own mind I named the ladies first. This certainly was not from any whim of ironical courtesy, and hardly more because of a persistent, if unsupported, belief in the honesty of Mr. Crane's employees. It was simply that my experience had brought me in contact with a good deal of what is politely termed kleptomania; and because the missing bracelet would, on account of its history, unique design, and workmanship, be likely to excite in one accustomed to fine jewelry a cupidity more compelling than any temptation its money value might arouse in maid or man servant. But at that point in my reasoning I pulled up short. Here I was dragging the aniseed bag, and at the same time raising a hue and cry on its trail. I threw my cigar butt into the fire, and asked Mr. Crane's permission to retire.

And right then I was sharply brought to a sense of how highly charged had become the atmosphere of the house. As I arose, Mr. Effingham jumped to his feet, and, looking straight into my eyes, jerked out, while he wagged a finger at me:

"One thing, Mr. Cuthbert! Whatever's become of this—this bracelet, wherever you find it, remember I won't

stand for any damn insinuations how it got there! I'm able to buy a bushel of bracelets and give 'em to—any one who thinks he or she ought to have 'em. And I will—only, oh, hang it, Crane! I'm so wrought up I don't know what I'm saying. Forgive me, old man, and forget it."

And with that he dropped back into his chair, and began pulling at his collar. His face was swollen with blood; he seemed almost to be choking. I guessed that it was of his wife upstairs he was thinking, and that what had passed his lips probably was in the hearts of the three other men. I was sorry for them all. And I was a good deal more than sorry for myself. But there was only one way out for me, and that was over the bars. I must perform, and I must perform successfully. Mrs. Crane must recover her bracelet promptly. A good night's rest seemed to be the surest preparation. I left the room without a word, and went to bed.

I was not yet undressed when Mr. Crane's voice in a whisper pronounced my name at the door. I let him in.

"I want to speak to you about what just occurred in the billiard room," he explained. "You see we're all tuned to a little more than concert pitch; and Effingham, who is excitable, anyhow, is the worst off. He's almost at the point where if you laid your hand on his shoulder he'd yell. That outburst of his—"

"Don't worry yourself," I interrupted. "I understand perfectly. He wasn't thinking of himself. Any married man when his wife is one—"

I found myself at a loss for the diplomatic word; and, while I hesitated, Mr. Crane took a step forward and braced himself.

"Mrs. Effingham," he said, "is—well, it's this way. When you see the ladies to-morrow, naturally you're going to form some sort of—professional opinion. Hold on!" as I raised a protesting hand. "I'm not saying you suspect any one. But you couldn't stay in business and neglect to size up your people, and I can't allow even the smallest mistake to be made among mine. What I'd like

to remind you of is that appearances aren't everything. A good many persons have been tried and sentenced on some unlucky fact that had nothing to do with the case. So with Mrs. Effingham—I'm speaking with you frankly. She is a clever woman; but she is excessively fond of fine jewelry, and indulges the fondness, as you will notice. And—you might never hear of this, but again you might, and then you'd be very likely to go wrong—she has said more than once she wanted a bracelet like that one of Mrs. Crane's."

"Which is the very best of reasons," I interpolated, "why, if she is a clever woman, she would never do anything foolish."

Mr. Crane grasped my hand.

"I made no mistake in you, Mr. Cuthbert. Thank you very much, and—good night!"

There are by actual count, I have been told, two hundred and seventeen infallible remedies for sleeplessness. That night I gave each of these remedies a faithful trial. But I must have omitted some essential element, for, at five o'clock in the morning, I was still staring at the slit of pale illumination beneath the edge of the eastern window curtain, through which, for hours, had winked at me some bright star. Just why I remained awake I was not able to say, for with me sleep, like eating, is a pleasure as well as a duty, and I had gone to bed with the conviction that the next day's work could not be advanced by planning at present.

For all that, my mind continued to busy itself. Way back in my memory of recent events was something of which I seemed to perceive and be able to grasp only the tail, the rest of it refusing to come forth, though insisting on identification. And with that recalcitrant idea I struggled vainly, off and on, for a long time. Then with the first blush of dawn it suddenly popped out of its hiding place, for no particular reason, and I recognized its tail for a mental question mark, the question itself for one I had automatically pigeonholed, as it were, just before coming to bed.

The question was this: Why does Mr. Effingham wear calfskin, laced shoes with otherwise unimpeachable evening dress? At another time the apparent futility of the query would have made me laugh. Now, on the contrary, I gravely turned it over and over, and was more busy than ever with trying to decide why I had ever tucked it away in my head, and how the answer to it, whatever that was, could be of use. I recalled noticing, as we sat before the fire in the billiard room, that, except for myself, only the rosy-gilled and plump banker did not wear the conventional patent leathers; but with this fact nothing else was associated.

I tried to make myself think that the observation was one of those idle diversions with which all of us at times occupy ourselves when sitting silent. But for almost an hour more it bothered me; the reason being, I suppose, that to one in my rôle it stood for a sort of challenge. At last, disgusted and worn out with labor, which had brought forth such a mouse, my mind succumbed to fatigue and the flogging it had received, and I fell asleep.

I was awakened by Tarrant, who informed me it was nine o'clock. By the time I got downstairs the rest of the household had breakfasted. In the hallway, immediately afterward, I came upon the whole party, obviously assembled to meet me and learn what I proposed should be done.

The mental estimate I made of the four ladies, during the few minutes of rather constrained talk that followed, entirely agreed with my preconceptions. Allowance being made for the embarrassment of their situation, they were just such women as one would expect in view of their station in life and the men they had married.

As for Mrs. Effingham, slender, dark-haired, with an oval face and a provoking little twist at the corner of her lips, she was the youngest of them, and frankly the least conventional in habit and dress. Under other conditions, her evident fancy for bizarre jewelry would have earned no more than the lifting of an eyebrow. With things as they were

—well, it is on trifles we often have to build; and if Mr. Crane had not prepared me, I might have been led into one of those awkward misconstructions which I, least of all, could afford.

As soon as I decently could I left them, having Mr. Crane's permission to make an inspection of the house. This I began with the room occupied by the host and hostess, a large, square apartment, with windows on three sides, all of them looking down from straight, untrellised walls to the lawn and driveway.

The broad mahogany bureau on which Mrs. Crane, according to her statement, had left the bracelet faced me from the door on the fourth side. On the same side a second door opened into a small dressing room. A thick carpet reached to the surbase on every hand, and was closely tacked down. There were no indications of the hunt that I was told had been made; but for that, of course, well-trained servants accounted.

The conclusion began to force itself upon me that a house furnished as was this, and in such excellent keeping, must almost certainly have yielded to the first searchers anything as easily recognized as a bracelet. Of the thoroughness of that first search, however, I had no guarantee. Besides, I was bound to see for myself. So I went on.

The details of my search are not worth while. Enough to say that an hour elapsed before I was satisfied that the bracelet, if still in Mrs. Crane's room, was not outside of the bureau; and against the chance that it was there I accepted for the present the positive assurance to the contrary I had had from the lady herself. The dressing room, in turn, I quickly disposed of; and, the door at its farther side being closed, I retraced my steps to the balcony hallway, upon which all the rooms gave. Here the invitation, extended by an open door almost directly opposite, led me to enter a second bedchamber.

From a dressing case, bearing the initials G. E., which was on a table near a window, I judged that this room belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Effingham. My task here was even more speedily ac-

complished, and I had started to leave, when on the floor, close to the head of the bed, laid precisely side by side, my eyes fell upon a pair of patent-leather pumps. I had seen them before; in fact, my hands had passed over them in the course of my search, but now they held my attention. They were small pumps, from the bench of a fashionable boot-maker, and obviously intended for the neat feet of Mr. Effingham.

Mr. Effingham! Into my brain leaped recollection of what had caused me so many sleepless hours. And trifling as still seemed that question, it challenged me with fresh persistence; its answer became more puzzling. For, if Mr. Effingham had brought patent-leather pumps along with him, why did he not wear them? Or, if it was not his habit to wear them, why did he bring them with him at all?

These propositions I pondered for a minute, sensible the while of the apparent silliness of the proceeding; and it was, as I will admit, out of curiosity and nothing else, that I finally stepped forward, stooped, and picked up the pumps. Promptly from the toe of the right-hand shoe slid the missing bracelet.

It could be none other. There was the crocodile curled on itself, the gold, of dull finish, worn shiny where it had rubbed against the wrist of its wearer. I took it out of the shoe and laid it on my palm. My mouth was puckered in the beginning of a whistle, my brows were drawn down, and my mental processes in a state of paralysis. But only for a minute. Coupled with realization of whom this involved came also realization that of all things this was the one thing no one else must know.

I was just too late in my decision. From back of me came the sound of breath sharply indrawn, and then in Mr. Effingham's voice:

"When you're done with my shoes, Mr. Cuthbert, you might put them down." And then Mr. Effingham himself stepped from the thick rug of the hallway into the room, and closed the door behind him. "Looks a little as if I made a mistake in talking last evening," he observed dryly.

And then I knew he had seen the bracelet in my hand.

For a moment afterward neither of us spoke. When I took the plunge, it was because it seemed nothing was to be gained by beating about the bush.

"I found the bracelet in your pumps," I said, "while I was making a search of the house, by Mr. Crane's instructions. I had hunted through his rooms before I came here."

"Yes?" The crispness was gone from his tone. "And now that you have found it in my room, in my shoes?"

"I shall go downstairs and tell him I discovered it in *his* room—under the bed or the bureau, or between the bureau and wall. Any place will serve. They'll wonder, but they'll believe me. The point is, it has been found—found wherever I say."

"Oh!" he said. "I see!" After which came a brief pause. Then: "But you're wrong, Cuthbert. You're going to do nothing of the sort. What you are going to do is walk straight to Mr. Crane, tell him exactly where you did find it, and just why you thought to look for it there. Damnation, man! You don't think I'm going to have any one, even if he keeps it to himself, put me down as a thief!"

It takes an outsider sometimes to show an expert how badly he's bungled. And so it was now. Whatever inheritance of good breeding I have came to my assistance. I laid down the pumps and stretched out a hand.

"Mr. Effingham, I ask your pardon," I said.

As our grasp met, his plump face creased in a smile.

"It's yours," he answered. "Your intentions were right, anyway." Then the smile faded. "But it leaves me," he added, "in a very ugly fix. And it's up to you, I think, to get me out—if you can."

"Let's get out of here first," I suggested, pocketing the bracelet.

Together we left the room. At the end of the hallway we stopped.

"After all," I said, "why not what I first proposed? No one will be the

wiser, except me, and you know where I stand."

He shook his head.

"That's good of you, Cuthbert. But it won't do. Tell me, now, why did you think of my pumps?"

"I didn't think of them—as a hiding place. But they were a good deal on my mind. You see, you didn't wear them last evening, as the others did, and that seemed odd for you; and—well, I'm curious, as I have to be."

"I see," he said. "But the only reason I didn't wear them was that they are new, and hurt me like the devil the night before."

"You don't have to explain," I put in. "But some one else should—about how the bracelet got there, I mean. Where did you put those pumps the last time you wore them?"

"In the closet in my room. No, it was outside my door—when I went to bed. I wanted them polished."

It was just then that Tarrant appeared, coming from the dimness at the head of the rear stairway.

"Tarrant," I asked, "who looks after the shoes?"

"I do, sir," he said. And his face grew red.

"Tarrant," I asked, "did you polish Mr. Effingham's patent-leather pumps night before last? Did you do it yourself? And where did you find them, and where did you leave them?"

The man stiffened his back, and looked me in the face squarely.

"I suppose I'm to blame, sir, if it's Mr. Effingham has complained. The fact is, I believe I put them where I found 'em, outside his door. But nurse, she says, I didn't. She says she found 'em near Master Bobby's door there, right next to Mr. Effingham's, when she came up to dress him yesterday morning, and that she set 'em alongside another door, thinking it was there they belonged. She must have got the rooms mixed. But, of course, I take all the blame. And I'm very sorry, sir."

"Thank you, Tarrant. I'm sure Mr. Effingham is satisfied. As for Master Bobby, I don't believe I have met him."

"No, sir, nurse took him back to his

father's yesterday. He's been spending a week here with his grandfather, Mr. Crane."

"I see. Thank you again, Tarrant."

As soon as the man was gone, I entered the room he had indicated. One glance sufficed to show it had been the indoor playground of an active boy of six or eight years. Evidently Master Bobby was a favorite with his grandparents. The big bay window, at the far end, was a veritable toy shop—stables, horses, and wagons, and an electric railway flanking a battlefield, on which stood in ranks or lay on their backs a whole army of lead soldiers. A giant Teddy bear, wearing a pair of child's shoes, regarded apathetically the field of battle.

But it was something else which interested me most. Halfway to the window was a closed door; and, as I laid my hand upon the knob of this door, it opened, and I found myself looking into a dressing room, and beyond that into Mrs. Crane's bedchamber. I took a look at the lock of the door; there was no key on either side. It came to me all at once that my task was about done.

Mr. Effingham had followed me, and I turned to him.

"Have you children of your own?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "But a bit old for this sort of thing, I'm afraid." He was looking at the toys.

"But not so old, I imagine, that you don't remember when there was a crib or a small bed in the next room to yours, or that a small boy or girl often wandered into your room along about the time you were getting in that last hour of morning sleep."

"No; it's not so far back as all that," he answered slowly. Then his eyes met mine, and his expression changed. "What are you driving at?" he demanded.

"Trying to make a picture for myself of what happened yesterday morning, about six o'clock, say, here and in Mr. Crane's room. Trying to make believe I am a six-year-old, and have waked up before anybody else is around. On my morning program, as I remember,

nurse comes first. But, it seems, she hasn't yet appeared. So I go to take a look for her—Teddy bear in my arms, perhaps. No nurse in sight; but across the hall something else that appeals to my fancy—a pair of shiny pumps. Teddy bear is wearing shoes—not his own; why not I? So into the pumps I slip my feet, and skate back into my room. And for five minutes they keep me busy. Then I grow tired of trying to keep them on. I want some one to play with, and I go through this door—it is not locked, you see—into grandfather's and grandmother's room. But they are asleep, and I wander around, looking at things—on grandmother's bureau. When I come back here I have a prize—this!"

I opened my fingers and showed the bracelet.

"This lasts me—perhaps five minutes—perhaps longer. But even its charms wear out before nurse comes in, and I drop it, just because I want to or just because I don't care—into one of those shiny pumps, Mr. Effingham's—nurse found them near my door you'll recall. And, that being done, I forget all about it, and am taken away soon after, so that no one is the wiser, even when they go through my room with the rest of the house; as, of course, they do. And there the bracelet remains, nestled snugly in the toe of the pump, out of sight, until just now. And that's about all, I believe. Do I make good—as a six-year-old, I mean?"

Just then, from the doorway, came a scattered volley of applause, and I swung about guiltily; and, I suppose, Mr. Effingham did the same. In the hall stood the rest of the party—Mr. Crane in front. And, as I began to apologize, he held up his hand.

"Please don't," he said. "We'll do all the apologizing needed, for we broke our promise. But we couldn't help it. I heard so much going on, I had to come to investigate. And then I sneaked the others up, to see for themselves. And we saw, and heard, and—well, Cuthbert, speaking as your grandfather, for the time being, I'm proud of you. For a six-year-old, you are a wonder."

MIRANDA



Georgia Wood Pangborn



ELL, then," said my father, "I'll give you September to do it in. You can have the cottage and its poetic view of the ocean. Maria and Jack will wait on you—unless you prefer to cook for yourself." I didn't. "I'll give you all of September to write your play. A whole month. If you make good I've nothing to say. Go ahead and be another Shakespeare; but if the egg you want to lay so badly is addled, after all, I'll see you at my office on the first of October. Wholesale groceries ain't half bad," he said, rather wistfully. "I've even thought if I'd been in the writing line myself, I could 'a' smelt out romance on my wharves when the tea and coffee are unloading. Did you ever think," he asked hopefully, "of writing advertisements?"

I admitted I hadn't.

"Well, I don't say I don't wish you luck, and I don't say as I do. A man rather likes to have his son in his own business, providing it's good and respectable."

"Now, my dear," mother said, lingering, as usual, for a last word behind his back, "you just go ahead and don't mind father. He's terribly proud of your education; but, literature—well, it don't seem practical. He thinks you'll wear long hair and strike attitudes like that softy who was hanging around Millie this summer."

"Le Vallissime!"

"Well, he's kind of famous, ain't he?"

"I suppose he is. Sorry dad thinks I've got the makings of that sort."

"Well, don't you fret. Mother understands. And I bet it'll run on Broadway three hundred nights in the year."

And so they went—bless their dear hearts!—leaving me as they had made me, and as they were proud of having made me.

So I have a month in which to prove that I can do something better—if it is better—than my father did. And here I sit in a "magic casement opened on the foam of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn," and try to think in meters and epigrams while the leaves of the calendar fall like the autumn leaves.

I tried to make him see that a month was a short time, but I couldn't. He's a business man, and time is money. Of course I can't do it; but I was glad of the respite of a month before settling down to groceries for the rest of my life. And then—inspiration *might* come. Wasn't it in about three days that Stephen Crane wrote the "Red Badge of Courage"? And then "Rasselas"; that was a literary Marathon, too. It's been done.

Our bluff goes down at an angle of forty-five degrees for seventy feet. The sea looks bigger when you're up so high. When there's a storm it's bully. I see that the last three days have moved the wreck again. It's on our beach now; a nice long bottom of a ship, big enough to take the place of a board walk at low tide. We've played it was a board walk

all summer. Now one cottage has had it, and now another, as the tides and storms moved it around the Sound. I suppose the winter storms will either bury it high in the sand or take it out to sea again.

There's that girl again!

I wonder if she knows the tide is about to turn? Well, I'm not going down those eighty odd steps to tell her so; but if she doesn't come in pretty soon from the far end of that nice board walk, it's little Johnny to the rescue. She acts rather as if she were a poet or something, too. But even a cat ought to feel poetic and scary at such a sea as that—black and purple waves, black and purple clouds, with a glare of pink coming through like burning Walhalla. And a good surf running. I don't think I ever saw the sea so black. And the storm has brought in that great drift of seaweed again. If she thinks she's going to walk to town along the beach, she's going to have trouble. It's all in a slushy mess as high as her head.

Odd how, when a place is as deserted as this, the only people who are left seem to be on deck all the time. If I go to the post office she's there. If I ride over the moors, she's walking over them. If I walk along the beach, there she is picking up shells; and now if I look out of the window, there she is standing on my wreck and meditating. It's like the old nursery game: "Just like me." I don't mind; but I can see she is getting cross about it. You don't suppose she thinks I do it on purpose?

I can't think why we haven't met this summer. I thought I knew everybody. And I can't make out which cottage she comes from. Wonder if she's rusticated, too? No, we haven't met this summer; but I could swear we've met *somewhere*. Could I have danced with her and forgotten it? That seems hardly possible. Or else—probably I've just seen her in a crowd; sat opposite her on the elevated; something like that. Or—could it be the stage? It might be; there's such a lot of stage people here, only I thought this was the time for

rehearsals. However, if she stays out on the end of that wreck about ten minutes more, I shall find out.

Well—everybody's gone again. No, not everybody. I wonder why young Mr. Burke stays on? It makes me so cross to meet him riding around that way, and looking as if he had everything in the wide world a human being could possibly wish for. The creak of his saddle leather as he goes by, and the shine of his stirrups, and the lovely soft browns and grays of his riding suit, are things that no wise girl should think about.

I don't mind people of that sort so much when they're in a crowd. Then I'm just like the other islanders; all I care about is to make money out of them. But this lone, lorn young Lothario stirs my imagination, and makes me remember that, after all, I'm young, and that I want—oh, I do want pretty things. I want to ride over the moors instead of walking all the time. I want a horse just like his, and to go riding away—away. A boat isn't the same. And—yes—I'd like him to come along. I think I'd be more fun than that piggy-eyed girl he has been about with all summer.

Poor daddy and his marines! I suppose he hasn't the least idea that it's my silly work that pays the bills. Well, that's what it is to be a genius. But if he had known that I was a waitress at the hotel last summer—what would he have said to that, I wonder!

Oh, dear! I wonder if I could paint real marines like daddy's, only—salable. Here's the ocean. Here am I. I have paints, and daddy could give me criticisms if he would.

The sea is lovely—if one weren't so young and didn't want something else so badly. I don't exactly know what; but it seems to be expressed by Mr. Burke's creaking saddle, and shiny stirrups, and pretty clothes as he goes by and leaves me in a sand cloud. I don't mean I want *him*—gracious, no! But he's a sort of symbol.

This old wreck is nice. I'll make some post cards of it. They like wrecks.

I suppose they don't realize what wrecks mean. They've never seen new wreckage come in. If they had they wouldn't want 'em on post cards. Oh, dear me, what a big, black ocean it is! I don't know if I hate or love it. A whole ocean between me and the rest of the world! But if I could paint it—could I build a raft of my sketches to take me across—only daddy would have to come, too, and I suppose he wouldn't want to.

There, the tide is turning. I heard it slap. And now, what a bore, I've got to wade back, and it's cold. Well, here goes for shoes and stockings; and I hope *this* time the ever-present Mr. Burke is *not* strolling along the beach.

Well, by the genius of all that's inopportune, there he is! Just coming down his own bluff stairs. Now what? I can't take off my shoes and stockings, and in a few minutes my wreck will be awash. Oh, well, I'll wait until he gets by, and swim, but—I wish it weren't so cold.

"If I had an *aéroplane*, I'd sail down from the bluff and pick you up as neatly as a hawk picks up a chicken, and sail back with you, and neither of us would wet a feather. Not having one, I'm afraid you must allow me to wade out to you and carry you back. It's a way tides have—this."

"Thank you so much, but I generally use *aéroplanes*. Couldn't you telephone for one?"

"I'll be sure to have one on hand next time; but that last wave wet your shoes. I fancy we'd better not wait. Now, if you'll permit me. There! Didn't I do it nicely?"

"I—I'm very grateful, indeed; but I'm afraid you're terribly wet yourself. It was outrageously careless of me."

"Is this the sixth or seventh time we've met to-day?"

"Seventh. No—sixth. I saw you once when you didn't see me. Does that count? That would make seven."

"Eight, then; because I saw you once when you didn't see me. I was up in my magic casement trying to concentrate, and you went by in a rowboat. I

recognized you without the glasses. Then I used them, and saw that your lips were moving. I've been wondering what poem you were reciting out there all to yourself. It was choppy than I'd have cared to row about in."

"Reciting? Oh!

"Earth cannot answer, nor the seas that
mourn
In flowing purple of their lord forlorn."

Would you call it so choppy? But I'm used to rowing."

"Do you often spend the summers here?"

"I always do."

"Do you often stay as late as this?"

"Always."

"Really? I never have before. People run away from the autumn storms. Hereafter I'm going to stay for them. They're the best part of it."

"I'm awfully grateful; but I must go, and—no—you mustn't walk back with me—really—for several reasons. One is you're soaked, and it's not hygienic to stay in wet clothes."

"And the other?"

"Please don't make me say anything nasty."

"I don't think you could."

"Well, then, saving a person's life—or saving one from a wetting, doesn't *quite* take the place of an introduction, does it?"

"Madam, I don't know your name, but for the past week we've been walking over each other at every fence corner; and, except for the venerable native shellbacks, I really believe we're the only two people on the island. We are marooned here together. I don't know what your crime was; but mine was to dream a dream; and I am expiating it by realizing that it *is* a dream. I have three weeks more to realize it in, and then—I go back to sand the sugar and thin the coffee with chicory forevermore. But to go back. My name is Burke. My father is McNab, Burke & Co. There isn't any McNab. I finished at Yale this spring, and I'm up here to think it over. I am respectable. I am—I *am*. And if it hadn't been for me— Do you see that very curly

black shadow down there, just this side the wreck—somewhere between three and fifty feet long? See how fast he wiggles? He flapped around my ankles when I waded in. If you had waded out, he'd have flapped around *your* ankles. Maybe I didn't save your life; but I saved you from stepping on an eel. Please, mayn't we be acquainted?"

"Seems to me we're getting on pretty well without being acquainted."

"Why, you know it's like when they agree 'Whereas, by the action of the other fellow a state of war exists—' See? You don't have to declare war in order to have war, and you don't have to be introduced in order to be acquainted. Now, then! Whereas, thanks to the wreck and the eels we are acquainted. What did you say your name was?"

"Jane Doe."

"That's not fair. However—well, if I go back now for dry duds, will you please bow to-morrow morning at the post office, and all the other times we're sure to meet?"

"If I can remember."

"Thank you so much."

Now she's gone. I'm going to do my heroine all over again. "Jane Doe." Iphigenia, Helen—why, I hadn't realized she was a beauty. Perhaps it was the way the wind took her hair. And then she was blushing so. I hope I wasn't too— But she didn't seem angry. I'm not sure she wasn't pleased. But what can a girl like *that* be doing up here all alone at this time of year? Who can she be? What a manner she has—makes one feel coarse-fibered and clumsy. I seem to see her in a court train and a tiara. Did she look a little scornful when I mentioned the grocery business?

"Good morning, Mr. Burke."

"Good morning, Miss Doe. D'you mind if I get down?"

"You don't seem to wait for answers to your questions. I think I *do* mind your getting down. Please mount and go on with your ride."

"But I'd rather not. Aren't we glo-

riously sensible to stop for September? I think I never saw such a morning. There was still quite a bit of surf at sunrise. Do you swim?"

"A little."

"Please, why didn't we meet this summer, or last summer, or summer before that? And what is your real name, and which is your cottage? I beg your pardon—I—have I been rude? Did I say something— But—oh, *please*—but you mustn't! What a brute I must have been, yet I can't for the life of me think how—"

"You haven't been a brute at all. Don't you know that girls often cry without any reason? Are you quite sure you don't remember my face? Quite—quite sure? See here—if I pin my handkerchief—so—and so—and put it on my head—so. Now pretend I have an apron on—'Clam chowder or consommé, sir?' Now have you ever seen me before? And—and—*now* will you please get on your horse, sir, and ride away, sir, and keep to your end of the island, sir, and I'll keep to mine. It's a shame to stand there and watch me cry—go away. Ah! I thought you were a—gentleman. But it seems not. I suppose, though, you always kiss the maids."

"I couldn't help it. It wasn't an insult. It was—I don't know what it was, but not that. Yes, I remember you. What does it mean? You live here all the year around, all the long winter here? You see the winter storms and wrecks. These are *your* moors? I might have guessed. There was an eldritch kind of mystery about you. So *that* was it! The sea in your eyes and the wind in your hair! Have I really made you so angry? But please don't look like that, because I'm not going to say—or I'll try not to say—what you don't want to hear."

"This is my house, Mr. Burke. It is so little that you didn't even realize it was a house, did you? But that is the way fishermen have to build on account of the winter winds. The big cottages that are shut up all winter don't mind; but on the moors in winter we have to be low and little. Still, we are amazing-

ly comfortable—my father and I. He has a good north light for his painting. We have two rooms and a little loft. You will have read poems about drift-wood fires; they *are* cozy. And one can gather quite a bit for one's self, though it's heavier than you'd think when it's loggy with sea water. These little gray nubbins of houses are really the aristocracy of the island. Ours is a hundred and fifty years old, they say; and every stick of it has been to sea—perhaps around the world. When the wind is right, you can hear the ghosts of drowned sailors calling and shouting among the planks of what used to be their ship."

"Miranda!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Oh, I just happened to think where you belonged—in literature."

"Oddly enough it *is* my name. My father is—an educated man, you see, and something of a Prospero. Yes; he named me Miranda. It used to worry me; but I don't mind now."

"Admired Miranda—"

"I'd rather you wouldn't be silly. I never thought much of Ferdinand, anyhow. My last name is Smith. My father paints marines. He paints very well, too. But one may be a very great painter and a noble man, and nobody but one's daughter be the wiser. He didn't know that I waited at the hotel. Now I'm going in. Good-by—and, if you please, sir, it is good-by. I shall forget to bow next time."

"That's right—shut the door in my face. But it's *not* good-by. Not if I fight it out here all winter. It's not good-by."

"But I told you yesterday afternoon that we were not going to speak any more."

"Speaking as a business man—and I should have something of barter in my blood, being the only son of McNab, Burke & Co.; and there isn't any McNab—it takes two to make a bargain. I didn't agree that we weren't to speak. If you hadn't shut the door in my face, and turned the key, you'd have heard me not agreeing. I had thoughts of the

window. But not knowing just how muscular a man your father might be, or whether his pistol was loaded, I thought I'd take the chances on your coming out again some time."

"I think you are very unkind, and I think you are not what I supposed a gentleman—would be like. But so far my father is the only gentleman I know much about. And still I remember when you and your mother dined at the hotel for a while, I thought—I didn't mind taking tips from you quite as much as from some of the others. Now you make me wish I had all that money—it came to three dollars—to give back to you."

"It's you who are unkind. Don't you know—can't you see—"

"I rather think I don't want to know. We have nothing in common. Our lives are as far apart as if—as if I were an Eskimo. If you trouble me any more, I shall go into the house and stay there while you're on the island."

"Why—then—out with it! I stayed up here to dream of a misty heroine creature, and put her on paper, and get famous over her so that I needn't mix up with raisins and prunes for the rest of my life; and I've found a woman of flesh and blood instead. And the dream's all gone; every bit of it. And I want just you—you forever. I want to go back into the business and make it hum, so that I can lay all the pretty things in the world at your feet. I know it hasn't been long, but—but—I can't begin to tell you how real it is. Marry me now, and I'll take you back to father, and say: 'I've got it—this was what I stayed up there for, though I didn't know what it was at first. And now put me in harness, and make a man of me as much like yourself as ever you can, so that I can make her as happy as you've made my mother.'"

"I—I—I thank you, Mr. Burke. You have done me a great honor. I shall be better and happier for it all my life. I'm sorry I must give you pain, yet I must say no. And now—please let me go in. And I fancy it would be better for both of us if you go back to New York now."

"Then—is there some one else? I'm afraid I must insist on your telling me that. Is there somebody else? Conceited ass that I am, I never dreamed of that! You—you so filled the world—you were the only woman in it, and so I supposed I was the only man. You haven't said yet, though, that there is somebody else. It's the only reason that will make me go. For if it is just that you don't love me—I'd understand I hadn't given you time, and I know I could *make* you care. So is it any one else?"

"Yes—oh, yes. Please go."

"Why—then— Good-by."

"I've come back to say one thing more. You mustn't feel unhappy about it, you know. It hurts—I can't tell you how it hurts—but I'm not going to say, as a fellow sometimes does, that you've spoiled my life. I won't let it do that. I'll try—to be more of a man instead of less. And now I'll go. But, oh—the sea in your eyes and the sun in your hair. He won't mind if I kiss your hand—so. There, I've done it, anyway. Good-by."

Now he is gone. "Any one else!" An old, old, sorrowful man, who has nothing in all the world but me. Oh, you are young, my love, and there will be other women in the world with eyes and hair. May you find one that will be good to you. She mustn't be selfish and horrid. I'll find out, and if she is, I'll kill her, I think. I want you to be happy, to remember me only a little. Just that there was a girl who stood on a wreck too long, and you carried her ashore. And she married somebody, you'll think. You won't know that she belonged to an old man who had nobody else. I suppose this is what is meant by hearts breaking. I—don't wonder they call it that.

"Something of a blow, Cap'n Eli."

"Eh? Blow and snow—yep. The boat had a great time, they say, just out beyond the Rip. Just thirty days' mail aboard her—just only thirty days. Been to the post office yet, judge? It's a sight. Hull town's there."

"Cap'n, you and I don't get a letter once in a dog's age. What's thirty days' delay in the mails to us? We're past the age of letters. How old are you?"

"Waal, now, you're askin' me questions. My first voyage around the Horn was in fifty-one, nigh about sixty years ago—an' I was a married man then—three little shavers I left behind me, and one came soon after I went. By George, he was six years old when I came back!"

"Going on ninety, then, cap'n. I'm a mere boy to you. I'm only seventy-nine. Great climate, eh? They say of us that we islanders never die—just dry up and blow away. Old leaves like you'n me would better look out in a gale like this, or we'll go flapping out to sea like yesterday's newspaper. By George, this is fierce! Let's run up on the steps of the Burke cottage. It'll be some shelter. I don't see how these big shingle palaces stand it on these bluffs all winter. I expect any morning to find 'em blown over like a pack of cards. Hello! Who's this? Why, my dear, you oughtn't to be abroad in such a gale. Don't you know you're in danger of being turned into a sea gull? Must watch the waves, must you? Well, this is a good place for it, but stand close between two steady old shellbacks while you do it; and hold on tight or the wind'll get a purchase on that hair of yours and carry you right out to the mermaids. My dear, I've had it in mind to drop in on you since—your father's death. But I'm old, and haven't been over and above lively of late. He was of us, and yet not of us. I remember when he came to the island with you. A great pair you were. Prospero and Miranda. Miranda must have been about two years old; and never the one without the other. But he didn't care much for us islanders; it was the sea he wanted. I'm afraid we didn't understand him. We thought him haughty; but I've suspected he may have been shy and melancholy instead. Was it that?"

"I hardly know. We were very happy together."

"And now—what will you do?"

"Domestic service. What else?"

"What, really? Now, that's too bad—but it's sensible. Yes, that's certainly sensible. Yes, sir. Well, sir, I'll go farther—it's thoroughbred. Hello—more oilskins! This porch is getting popular. Why, it's young Burke! Welcome to your hospitable roof, young man. I wouldn't spend the night under it for any money. What you doing so far from your right little tight little city? Our summer friends don't generally remember us in December. Don't run out into the storm that way, my dear. I want to talk more to you. I wanted to say— That's right, young man, catch her! Easy does it—so. *What* d'you think of that, cap'n? And they've gone to the porch of the next house, though it's farther than 'twould have been to come back here. Complimentary to us. We aren't good enough for 'em. Well, sir, it's fine to be young, yet I wouldn't have it to do over again. It's pretty to watch, love-making is; but—well—I don't know—it's the after years that count. It's the gray-headed wife—yes, sir—it's the wife that's borne your children and been patient with your temper."

"What made you come back?"

"I heard that your father was sick."

"He isn't sick any more."

"Do you mean—"

"He died about a week ago."

"Then I'm too late to help in any way. I don't know what to say. One's father is—well—there's nothing to say. I shouldn't want people to try to say things to me, I think. Do you mind my asking—shall you be married soon?"

"No."

"One reason I came. It occurred to me that possibly it was some sailor chap who had to be away, and so couldn't help you. I thought he must be a sailor, because I hadn't seen you going about with anybody during the summer. It made me rather wild to think of you shut up on the island here—with trouble. I told my mother. She said it was right to come. She said, too, that she'd be glad to have you come and stay with her the rest of the winter.

I'm—I'm going to be away, you know, and mother's such a trump. She's the sort of woman that knows how to take the hurt out of things. I can't describe it. 'Tisn't religion exactly; but it's making you look beyond. She's a kind of clearing house for everybody's troubles. I'm going to be away, you see. I'm going to Egypt—for a year or two, at least, and so you could. Wouldn't you like to be married from our house?"

"Why are you going to Egypt? Is it a business trip?"

"Partly. A man is supposed to travel, don't you know—after he gets through college."

"But I thought you were going into the business right away?"

"Why, I couldn't seem to take hold. Hookworm, I guess. They had doctor fellows to look me over, and they said I needed change—like these used-up society women. Nothing really wrong, only no grip. It's a bore to disappoint your parents; but I dare say a year or two will fix me up."

"Do you think you may write?"

"I don't seem to care about it. I fancy, though, it may turn out that way. When you've *'geliebt und gelebet'* enough, literature comes out on you like a rash. But when you can do it, then you don't care a hang. Oh, I'll do something. A war would be rather bully. Maybe I'll be a 'soldier of fortune.'"

"War?"

"Not here. But South America gives a lot of chances. If it weren't for mother—still, a mother like mine wouldn't stand in the way of my going if she thought it was best for me. She never said a word when I smashed ankles and things at football."

"I thought you seemed about the perfection of health and energy last summer. I—am sorry you're not well."

"Last summer—that was about a thousand years ago, wasn't it? 'We live in thoughts, not years.' Are you going to accept my mother's invitation? I'd like to send her a wireless this afternoon. Please do. Sis is going to be married, and mother will be all alone unless you do."

"When my father was dying he talked about my mother. It must be wonderful to have a mother. I thought yours was very lovely. But I was thinking of going out to— Wouldn't your mother like me for a maid? And I can cook. I must be independent."

"What! See here, who is this chap you're going to marry? Would he let you go into somebody else's kitchen? I want to see him."

"I don't think—in fact—I'm quite sure that I didn't say I was going to be married."

"What do you mean? *What* do you mean?"

"You asked if there was any one else. I couldn't leave my father, could I? He might have lived for years and years, and you'd have had to wait, for I couldn't have broken up the life he was used to. And you have been sick."

"Do you see those two old men over there on our veranda?"

"Judge Meacham and Cap'n Eli."

"They are a justice of the peace and a witness. No! I won't wait a day—not an hour. Oh, my dear, I've been as good as dead for more than two months, and now I'm alive. And you—you are—you, after all. Oh, damn the sailor I had imagined for you! And I tried to be so noble. And now I don't have to be any more, and we'll go home to mother and dad; and we'll have our house right next them; and I'll be a king of finance, and bring you a box of diamonds and chocolates every night when I come home from the office."

"I—I could nurse you. Are you so ill?"

"Ill? I? What do you mean? I'm the strongest man in the world. I *was* ill—sick to death, I thought, though I did try to take it like a man. The cure is the same as for the hurts of little children. Kiss me again, and I'll be well."



SUNFLOWERS

MY tall sunflowers love the sun,
Love the ardent summer noons
When the locust tunes its viol,
And the cricket croons.

When the purple night draws on,
With its planets hung on high,
And the fragrant winds of slumber
Wander down the sky,

Still my sunflowers love the sun,
Keep their ward and watch and wait
Till the rosy key of morning
Opes the eastern gate.

Then, when they have deeply quaffed
From the brimming cups of dew,
You may hear their golden laughter
All the garden through!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

BY THE SIGN THAT CONQUERS



Nalbro Bartley

THE press dispatch contained six words: "Native insurrection quelled without serious fighting." But this is the story.

Flavius Josephus Milo Carmetus Rufus L. Weyland Kamrald Emerald E. Lucas Victor Emanuel sat outside the *comandancia*, and sulked. Occasionally his hand would steal up to the collar of the ragged khaki uniform and start to unfasten it.

Then he would withdraw the dirty, brown fingers, and devote himself to envying the carabao, water buffalo, wallowing luxuriantly in the mud. Inside the *comandancia* frivolous officers were entertaining civil-service men by singing snatches of forbidden army songs to the twang of a sadly out-of-tune banjo.

"The land of dopy dreams, the sunny Philip-pines,
Where the natives steal and lie, and Americanos die."

The ragged object on the outside curled his lip in scorn. He examined his finger nails critically. What was it Cornelia had flaunted him about? "The grand, long finger nails" of some puny mestizo from Manila. How he hated that girl!

The banjo was trying to beat out an accompaniment to "Home, Sweet Home," and the cries of Lieutenant Slocum for more glasses made the outsider's lips stop curling and tighten dangerously. Besides hating Cornelia Fernandez, she of the dark, sparkling eyes and Spanish blood, he hated Lieu-

tenant Slocum, Lieutenant Fairbanks, the army surgeon, Doctor Grant, every member of the constabulary, every *tao* in the town and along the coast, every mestizo in the island, every Chinese shopkeeper, every dumb beast, and, lastly, his ancestors, for making him what he was—a hireling, a miserable cat's-paw for the damnable Americanos, an ugly, brown-skinned, thick-lipped, short-nailed, skulking hillman, without rank or prestige, a convert to Christianity, a despised outcast by his own people, and, bitterest of all, a rejected suitor for the hand of Cornelia Fernandez!

What did life offer to such a state of mind? If it were not for the fact that he had been christened and rechristened six times, and bore the longest cognomen of any native on the island, he would have despaired long ago. But when it came to having eleven perfectly good names and two stray initials, standing for nobody knows what, except that the priest was unusually zealous and a trifle lacking in imagination, it meant that his suit for Cornelia's hand had been furthered until the present priest had urged the banns to be read.

And now she laughed at him at the native dance last night. She said he was "ugly and horrid," and she hated his hands. She rolled her eyes in the direction of a disagreeably prosperous-looking person dressed in American clothes, whose yellow finger nails reminded one of a serpent's fangs, and she said, with that tantalizing tilt of her fan, that covered half her face: "Ohee

—you—big, stupid you! I marry you? Never. What have you ever done, stupid hillman? You are not brave. All you wish for is a wife to beat and work for you. You short-nailed man. You think I will plant your corn and sell it for you? Never. The Americanos, they know how to treat women. They teach the mestizos how to treat women. The mestizos have money, much money. Beside that, they are brave."

And she rolled her eyes back to the fat Manila mestizo, who, rumor had it, had been on a long trip and had even seen Washington, the capital of the United States.

Emanuel-of-the-many-names turned away with a grunt. He went to the nipa hut, and stripped off his clothes. He rolled in the mud until he was deliciously dirty. When he succeeded in covering himself with the gray slime, he donned his native costume, the G string, and returned to the dance.

He remembered bursting through the dancers and seizing Cornelia by the hand. He roared out that he was done with civilization and all the devil teachings that the white skins bring. He was going back to the hills with his own people, and live the one sane, respectable life. He was done with these madmen and madwomen, and he wanted all the world to know that this person dressed in Spanish costume was the cause of his undoing. And he wanted to thank her for it. He wanted to tell her he was very, very glad she had shown him the folly of his ways, that she had proved the horrible example of what civilization could do for one. And he also hoped the cholera spirit would come and sit close beside her, and breathe softly into her mouth—

Then Emanuel-of-the-many-names was assisted from the dance hall, and Lieutenant Slocum asked: "Any bino been slung around here? He doesn't talk like an ordinary jag."

But the army surgeon answered: "Not a drop. He's in love. Go ahead with the noise, boys."

So Emanuel was dragged over to the *comandancia*, and arrested on the charge of disorderly conduct. He was made to

wash himself, and wait on the poker party, which developed a continuous desire for liquid lunch.

In the morning, he was told that if the lady in question wished to marry him she would, undoubtedly, let him know, and if she did not he must grin and bear it, and prepare to dance at her wedding with a cheerful heart. And this was civilization! This was what civilization taught. Emanuel dug his heel into the brown earth, and visualized himself surprising the Manila mestizo in a bed of tangled mangroves, and playing a tattoo on his educated, prosperous bosom with a bolo knife.

His people taught that if a mere woman, a soulless being, refused to be your wife, you must kill the person she thought she fancied. If that did not bring her to her senses you must kill her, so that she would be annoying to look upon.

"Hi there, Emanuel," said Lieutenant Slocum, coming to the doorway. "Get a stir on and come inside—there's lots to be done before the captain arrives."

Emanuel hunched one shoulder higher than the other, and smiled diabolically. He would have killed Lieutenant Slocum then, only there were too many officers within. So he stumbled in obediently, and promptly fell asleep on the doormat.

"Oh, let him sleep," he heard Lieutenant Fairbanks say. "He's no good, anyhow."

Emanuel turned over contentedly. After all, civilization had some compensations, if it could prove to these block-headed white men that he had nothing in common with the thing they called work. His idea of happiness was to have absolutely nothing to think about, and to see a cockfight a day. That was to be after he married Cornelia, and had grown accustomed to seeing her about.

Lieutenant Slocum stepped to the door, and was standing on Emanuel's left leg, looking out. He thought he heard a horse's hoofs; but only the rows of nipa huts dotted irregularly among the coconut trees and the banana palms, and the steep, jungle-covered hills, be-

ginning in brilliant green hemp patches and ending in forests, were to be seen. A dozen native canoes—hollowed logs, rudely fashioned—were anchored at the bay. The wreck of a Chinese cattle boat lay half submerged in a tangled mangrove bed, and beyond, a group of native women were doing their washing in the bay.

Presently the quick, nervous sound of a galloping horse, a tired horse, made the homesick look die out of the man's tanned face. He waved both arms enthusiastically as the tall, stout man dismounted.

"It's good to see you, old boy," said Slocum, grasping his hand. "If you knew how Fairbanks has been trimming me at poker——"

The other looked at him gravely. "The red cross is seen," was all he said.

Slocum's hand dropped like a pistol shot. He gave a quick exclamation of surprise.

"Raleigh—are you sure?"

The captain entered the *comandancia*, walking boldly over the sleeping Emanuel, and seating himself at a table.

"Sure? They've wiped out enough of the *tao* to make even a hardened army man sick. God, but they wreck a place. They left the women and children bleeding at burning stakes, they made the Catholic church look like a pigsty; there isn't enough of little Daganni left to talk about."

Slocum's lips closed in a straight line.

"Where is the pretender to the Papa Pablo?" he demanded. "Isn't there any trace?"

Raleigh shook his head.

"Don't let the boys out here for a few minutes. I want to talk it over with you alone. The Pulahanese are out in full force, following the pretender. It's a joke, a hideous joke when dispatches go to Manila saying we've wiped them out."

Slocum tapped the table nervously with his finger tips. He, too, had his experience with the Pulahanese. Of all the bloodthirsty fanatics which the islands possessed, these hillmen could strike terror to the boldest of hearts. Claiming they were the true Catholic

church, and believing that by spilling blood of the unbelievers they were sending them by an extra quick route to salvation, they ravaged every town possible, torturing the women and children, killing the men, burning and destroying the buildings, and gathering the valuables together for the Papa Pablo, the native pope. The original Papa Pablo had never been satisfactorily brought to justice by the government. Half a dozen theories as to who the native pope was had been advanced and followed up. By the majority it was thought he had died in safety, surrounded by his followers. But the barbarism of the sect was being carried on at frequent intervals by various pretenders to the Papa Pablo, whom the natives would obey blindly.

It was this pretender, whose head must adorn the *comandancia* picket fence before the Pulahanese would admit defeat. It was the Papa Pablo whose cunning devised the plan of attack, the means of fight. In his hands lay the power to order a massacre or still the strife. But the Papa Pablo hid safely somewhere in the virgin jungle, secure from any marauding American hand.

The sign of the Pulahanese was the red cross in their hat, on the front of their tunics, on the red banner they waved. And most significant of all was the red wooden cross, fresh with human blood, which they planted in the heart of each ravaged settlement.

"We must capture the Papa Pablo," said Slocum, gritting his teeth. "We must get him—do you hear? We can't let this thing go on any longer."

"Capture him?" The older man laughed. "About as much chance as I have to succeed him in power. Why, he's hidden by hundreds of followers. The only thing that will capture the Papa Pablo is a Krag carbine."

Emanuel turned over on the floor; he had been listening carelessly to the conversation. Raleigh noticed him as he sprawled on one side.

"What's that?"

"You know Emanuel-of-the-many-names—he's supposed to be a secret-service man." Slocum laughed, a dis-

heartened, discouraged laugh. "He goes back to barbarism every little while, and returns repentant. Then a new priest christens him with a couple more names, and takes him back into the church. But Emanuel clings tightly to all his former names. He could be valuable if he wanted to—he's in with the hill people. Last night he stripped off his clothes and embraced savagery. In love with a half-caste girl, jealous."

"Better throw him out," advised Raleigh. "He could talk."

Slocum started forward. Emanuel raised up stealthily.

"I could find the Papa Pablo," he murmured sleepily. Then he fell back again.

Slocum dashed to his feet. He shook Emanuel vigorously.

"Wake up, wake up, you damned brown hillman—what did you say?"

Emanuel rolled his eyes, symbolic of a gripping pain and an unquenchable thirst. Slocum seized a decanter, and poured raw brandy down him.

"Listen to me, Emanuel," he said. "What do you know about the Pulahanes?"

Emanuel shrugged his shoulders. He wanted to be coaxed. Besides, he had almost decided to go back to his people, and it would not be nice to talk about one's own family to antagonistic strangers.

"Nothing," he muttered.

Emanuel did not know why he had murmured out about the Papa Pablo, but it was because his ignorant mind was obliged to think aloud, if he wanted to come to any conclusion. And Emanuel had thought very forcibly that he had an excellent clew as to just who the pretender Pulahane pope was.

Slocum and Raleigh looked at each other understandingly.

"Water cure?" they asked.

Emanuel twisted feverishly in their grasp.

"For the love of God," he whined, "no water cure."

He had helped administer the torturous water cure to a head-hunter, who dabbled about giving information as to his confederates. He had watched the

head-hunter's veins burst one by one, as the army officers completed their examination. No, he did not want the water cure.

"Then tell."

"Give me time."

There was a ring of sincerity in his voice that made even the hardened Slocum believe.

"But you know who he is," he said, grasping his arm, "and you've got to get his head—head—and cut it off, and bring it back here, and put it on a post for all the *tao* to see. You understand?"

Emanuel's eyes glistened. They lost their sleepy cunning. A strain of the old savage desire was awakened. Then the effect of civilization crept in.

"What will I get?" he demanded.

Raleigh looked at Slocum helplessly, but Slocum rose to the occasion.

"You will get what no other native in the island ever thought of receiving," he said slowly. "A medal from the President of the United States. Do you know what Captain Raleigh has brought with him? No? The medal from the President, to be given to the man who cuts off the head of the Papa Pablo. A medal that the President made with his own hands—and a letter to be read when it is presented. Think of that, Emanuel-of-the-many-names! Think of having your full name read aloud by the captain, of having the village president do you honor, of having all the school children come into the square and do you honor, of having all the *tao* envy you. We will have the priest's native band play for you, we will have the constabulary salute you, we will have the medal pinned on your breast for Cornelia to see—the medal from the President of the United States. That is, if you will wear your uniform, and not a G string."

Emanuel was sitting upright; his eyes looked out beyond the nipa huts and the drowsy, sleepy old bay with its canoes and tangled mangroves. He saw himself the hero, the lord of the hour; he saw Cornelia, envious, repentant, humbled, sitting meekly by and watching him receive the President's medal. His brain could no longer contain such

vast thoughts. He kissed Captain Raleigh's hand quickly, the hand that had brought this wonderful medal from Washington. Vaguely Emanuel wondered if Raleigh had been to Washington since last Sunday in order to get it.

Slocum, watching him cautiously, asked: "Well?"

"I'll get the head of the Papa Pablo," answered Emanuel, as he struggled to his feet.

A roar of voices from inside interrupted, and the discharged poker game burst into the room, greeting Raleigh hilariously. Slocum withdrew with Emanuel. It was a critical time for the island, and there was no time to lose.

"You'll not fail?" he said sternly, as he stared at the thick-lipped hillman.

And Emanuel, looking into the steel-gray eyes, felt strangely thrilled as he renewed his promise.

He met Cornelia on his way to his nipa hut. She smiled invitingly. But Emanuel pushed ahead. This was no time for women's foolishness. He was sent on a mission. He was through with barbarism. The President, the President of the United States had sent him a medal. By this time Emanuel was so intoxicated with the idea that he was positive the President at Washington had fashioned the medal for no other but Emanuel-of-the-many-names.

Civilization was right, it was glorious, it was the will of God that the Americans should rule. He would kill this puny pretender to the Papa Pablo. Bah, that was nothing. Then, he could come back to claim his reward. And after he had been hailed as chief, and the medal glistened on his uniform, perhaps—oh, perhaps, he might take Cornelia Ferdinandez aside and say very sharply: "See, fool, you have listened to such swine as the Manila half-breed; well, are you sorry?" And Cornelia, tears in her black, soft eyes, would kneel in the dust before him, Flavius Josephus Milo Carmetus Rufus L. Weyland Kamrard Emerald E. Lucas Victor Emanuel, and she would say: "Beat me, kill me, but turn not away

from me." And perhaps—but Emanuel could not think so far ahead.

"Will he get it?" Raleigh asked Slocum dubiously that night. "Or will he give them the alarm?"

Slocum shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a gamble either way. Decapitating the Papa Pablo is as distasteful for Emanuel-of-the-many-names as for you and me to banish a batch of spiders from the wall."

Raleigh lit a cigarette.

"That is what we Americans will never understand," he sighed. "We cling stubbornly to the remnants of the Ten Commandments."

Slocum leaned over for a light.

"While the sparkle in Cornelia's Spanish eyes would make Emanuel a loyal American soldier or a rank deserter, just as the sparkle dictated. In this case, the fair Cornelia scorns mere man unless he has proved himself brave. Therefore, I favor sharpening the picket post to be in readiness for the Papa Pablo's head."

"Another pleasant custom," Raleigh objected. "You mean to stick that hideous thing in sight of—"

"I mean," said Slocum quietly, "I mean to make every *tao* see that head. I don't propose to still the insurrection by publishing the pretender's obituary in a bordered frame. And if Emanuel-of-the-many-names deserts and stirs up more trouble, I mean to track him until we can stick his head on the picket post, and say to the *tao*: 'This is what happens to a deserter.' Either head will prove effective."

Raleigh smoked on in silence. He was learning many things from this young, almost boyish lieutenant.

A week later, when Slocum and Raleigh met, fearful lest they tell each other of a fresh outrage, when the *tao* came to the *comandancia* and waited for protection, when three inland towns had been ravaged by the Pulahanes, and the red cross planted in their midst—a naked, footsore man limped into the officers' quarters.

He was covered with cuts and wounds, his left eye was closed and black. His head was a mass of burns,

and there was a great gash on the right shoulder. But in his left hand he held a man's head—the head of a wrinkled, aged hillman. There were savage rings of paint about the cheeks, forming a red cross. Sunk into the yellow forehead was a rude crown made of raw, semi-precious stones and gold. It was the head of the Papa Pablo.

The priest celebrated high mass, Cornelia in front. The constabulary breathed its first easy breath since Emanuel-of-the-many-names had gone away. And they stuck the withered head of the pretender on the *comandancia* picket fence, and planted the American flag overhead. And the people, crossing themselves reverently, pledged a fresh allegiance to the American Government as they watched the bloodstained locks of coarse black hair blow to and fro in the breeze.

Underneath the head, directly underneath, sat Emanuel-of-the-many-names, clad in his native costume, sore, wounded, but triumphant, exultant. He sat with the fingers outstretched over his chest, his face smiling.

Cornelia, passing by timidly, glanced wistfully at him. But the victorious warrior sighed languidly, and closed his one well eye, pretending to doze.

After two days of this, Slocum made Emanuel surrender to the army surgeon, and be looked after. At the same time, the head of the pretender was removed, and the natives saw only the American flag waving in its place.

It was then that Raleigh said:

"How much are you going to give Emanuel?"

"I'll do the right thing," Slocum said vigorously. "I'll start Cornelia and him in housekeeping and——"

"Suppose he whoops about the medal?"

"Pshaw!" answered Slocum. "What's a medal and a little red fire compared to nice, clinking pesos that buy a wife, and corn, and whisky?"

When he asked Emanuel how much reward he expected, he was met with a look of livid hatred. Slocum drew back in surprise. He expected Emanuel to

name an outrageous sum, and then have the weary task of beating him down.

Had the lieutenant forgotten the medal, he was asked, the medal that lay waiting its presentation? Had he not risked his life to get the head of the pretender? He would tell many tales of danger if he chose. He had betrayed his own people to do this thing. And underlying all was the hope of winning Cornelia. Mere money would not suffice. The Manila swine had money, plenty of money. She told him so. It must be bravery that would make her his own. And now, just as the gates of paradise were being opened, was he to be shoved back? Did this wonderful civilization teach one to break his word, to offer stone in place of bread?

Slocum's eyes twinkled; then he patted Emanuel on the back vigorously.

"That was a try-out—I wanted to see if you were still patriotic or if money really talked."

Satisfied, Emanuel lay back on the army cot and smiled. Presently he raised his head.

"The priest's band, the exercises, the school children—you will not forget?"

"The whole outfit," was the answer.

Outside, Slocum grasped Raleigh, and whispered: "How the devil are we going to get a medal?"

"You can't."

"Then we may as well give a house party to the Pulahanes. This man risked his hide to get the Papa. If we refuse, he'll——"

"But a medal—it's impossible." Raleigh stamped up and down feverishly.

Slocum followed. Presently he burst forth:

"I promised it. He's earned it. I'm going to get it."

"How?"

"Don't know. But I am. Tell Emanuel he isn't well enough for the exercises until I get back. I may be gone a couple of days."

"Slocum, you're a fool. We can buy this hillman. You can't find a medal in the island—of all the damned nonsense——"

But Slocum took his pony and went—without a guide—into the jungle.

Queer how the safety of a nation often hinges on a trifle.

As he rode up the innumerable hills, steep, slippery, covered with rankst undergrowth, he realized what this man Emanuel had done. As he guided his horse through the vile, endless, clinging mud, subtle in its treachery, luring travelers onward, he swore that this man should have his due. As he crossed the creeks, alive with alligators, and the coral-bottomed bays, where the sharks acted as guides, his determination increased. There were stinging fish, stinging insects, thousands of leeches that sucked your blood and left holes for the slimy mud to make into festering sores. Two hours after he left the town, a sheet of icy rain drenched him, and gave him chills. He stopped at a native hut, where a leper woman offered food.

The next morning he went on stubbornly. A medal—a medal from the President! By this time Emanuel had told every crony he was to have a medal, probably the priest was rehearsing his band for the presentation exercises, and Cornelia had decided to marry the hero.

The blazing, blistering sun stung Slocum's whole body. There were mangrove swamps, salt-water forests, foul, swampy-rooted trees, growing in slime. Reptiles and uncanny bats came and went underfoot and overhead. A medal! Where was he to find a peddler?

Tacoblan! Who in Tacoblan would have a medal, any sort of a medal? There wasn't a pin or ornament in the other village that Emanuel would not have recognized. It was noon when he reached the settlement. He searched in vain for a medal. The American officers laughed at him, and warned him of the fever, should he keep on. There was a second-clothes Jew peddler somewhere in the outskirts, they said, but he carried no jewelry.

Slocum started ahead. The sight of the solitary figure on horseback made his heart leap. The peddler!

The Jew looked at him in dismay. He had plenty of secondhand clothing,

but no medals. Nothing on the jewelry order. He assured the lieutenant that it did not pay in this section of the island, he had already lost on a previous trip.

Then he started overhauling his pack. He asked if anything in silver would do. Slocum nodded feverishly.

"It's for cutting off a man's head," he murmured, "but anything will do."

"This was inside a dress I bought in Chicago," explained the peddler, as he brought to light a blue sailor blouse.

Chicago! Tears came into the man's eyes. Something about the girlish little blouse, the natty sailor tie, the very name of Chicago, brought back that gripping homesickness which he fought so desperately against.

He looked at the offered medal. Then he burst into a loud laugh.

"It'll do!" he shouted. "Ye gods, what a reward! But it'll do."

Slocum cantered into town, white and listless. Raleigh met him anxiously, and the doctor ordered him to bed.

"But I got it," said Slocum, in answer to the other's questioning gaze. "It's great."

"What is it?" persisted the members of the constabulary in vain.

To them it was one huge joke on Slocum. The idea of finding a medal in the jungle, a medal for cutting off the Papa Pablo's head.

Meanwhile the town prepared for the exercises. There was no school the next day. Cornelia, properly subdued and repentant, occupied the front row, just as Emanuel-of-the-many-names had imagined it. The native band stumbled through the "Poet and Peasant" overture, and the village president spoke in Spanish to praise this warrior.

The officers, with Emanuel in the middle, occupied the center of the stage. They applauded languidly, as the native teachers gave a drill and the primary children sang "America," and waved washed-out little American flags.

Slocum had convinced Raleigh that it was his due to present the medal. Emanuel, nervous, excited, ecstatically happy, was most uncomfortable in his

new uniform, although oblivious to his wounds and blackened eye. He sought Cornelia's glance, and smiled childishly. Where were his haughty threats of chastening her proud spirit?

Slocum rose to read the letter from Washington, accompanying the medal. Slocum had composed the letter with Raleigh's assistance. It was a long, ardent letter. It praised the brave man who killed the Papa Pablo, and thus secured peace and safety. It promised him a happy marriage, long life, much honor, much money, a secure place in heaven, and protection from the cholera god.

Slocum, folding the letter solemnly, turned and said: "Flavius Josephus Milo Carmetus Rufus L. Weyland Kamrald Emerald E. Lucas Victor Emanuel, stand up."

And, trembling, the hero stood, his brown cheeks paling with excitement, as he received the sacred badge of the President at Washington.

Then the children sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," and saluted him, and Cornelia threw herself into his arms and kissed him.

Emanuel had been cautioned not to show his badge—only to Cornelia, and then, not to let her touch it. Their luck might vanish, and the President at

Washington would be angry. So Emanuel drew aloof from the crowd and decided presently that to offer it to the little Jesus of Prague in the church would be the sure way of winning forgiveness of all past sins. Together, he and Cornelia crossed to the church, under the guidance of the kindly priest. Surely life could give no more.

But Raleigh, curious, unconvinced as to Slocum's taste in picking out medals, pursued them.

"I must see it," he told Emanuel. "I want to write the President how you took your honors."

Graciously Emanuel opened his outer coat, and let the medal be bared to human gaze.

Raleigh gave a queer choke.

"*Hoc signo vincimus*," he quoted softly, as he turned it over. "The triangle—Protestantism, Paganism, Catholicism! Yes, Emanuel-of-the-many-names, offer it to the little Jesus of Prague."

For the medal which the peddler found on the little girl's sailor suit in far-away Chicago and sold to Slocum as a reward for killing was a silver Maltese cross. On the front were the words: "Epworth League." On the back: "Lily D. For fifty-two Sundays' perfect attendance."



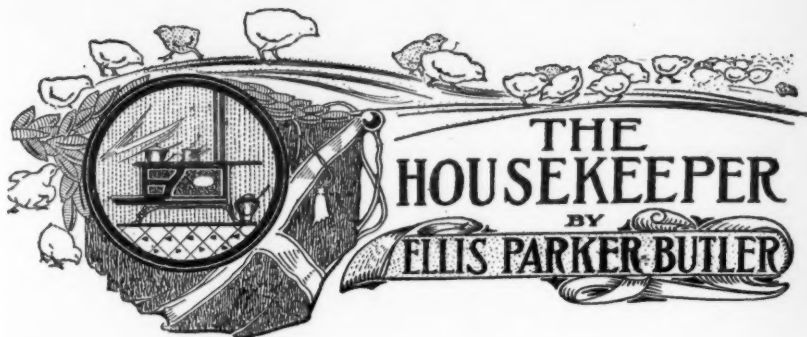
A SONG OF HELOISE

GOD send thee peace, ah, great, unhappy heart—
A world away I pray that thou mayst rest
Softly as on the Well-belovéd's breast,
Wherever in her wistful dreams thou art.

At dawn my prayer is all for thee, at noon
My very heart and, oh, at night my tears,
For all we walk alone the empty years
Nor meet 'neath any sun—'neath any moon.

Yet must my love go with thee—all apart
From this the life I lend to lesser things;
God send to thee this night beneath its wings
A little peace, oh, great, unhappy heart.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



THE "ranch" lay far out on Long Island, and four miles back from the railway station. Around it, on all sides, extended the seemingly endless wilderness of dwarf pines and scrub, but the ranch house itself stood at the top of the small roll of land called the "hill." From the ranch house, which was a very old frame farmhouse, the view was not beautiful. It was bounded on all sides by the tall fences of chicken wire, and subdivided into rectangles by still other tall fences of chicken wire, each rectangle having its own unhand-some, unpainted chicken house. There was a barn, and one or two elms, and a lawn with poorly nurtured grass, and that was all. The ranch—no one but an Englishman would have conceived the idea of calling anything on Long Island a ranch—was a chicken ranch, and the two young Englishmen had purchased it in a hurry, as they did every-thing.

They—they were Hodgson and Wilkerson—met in New York, with one idea in common, a ranch. They had seen much of the world. Hodgson had been sent, younger son-wise, to make his fortune, and had tried things like growing oranges in Patagonia, edible snails in Manchuria, and tea in Zam-besi; but the fortune that each venture promised had faded as the days passed. Wilkerson, also a younger son, had tried his hand at a llama ranch in Brazil, an ostrich farm in Africa, and

other live-stock ventures of greatly dis-appointing natures; and, with the re-mains of their capital, they had sought the new world, full of the idea that a ranch in America means ultimate wealth.

Hodgson, short and chubby, and Wilkerson, tall and blond, knew, the moment they met in the old Astor Hotel corridor, that thenceforth their lots must be combined.

"They charge a beastly price for roast fowl here, you know," said Hodgson. "Imagine! I had a very small fowl for my dinner, and the price was——"

"Devilish good money these farmer chaps must make at it," agreed Wilkerson. "By Jove! A chap might make his fortune at that, you know! Not a bad idea; what say? I declare, I've hawf a mind to speak to that clerk fellow about it!"

So he did. He confided his idea to the hotel clerk.

"Chickens?" said the hotel clerk. "You bet they are high! And you ought to see the price of eggs! That's the game there is money in. If I had a little capital, I'd be in it myself, you bet! Why, I heard of a fellow, just an ordi-nary fellow like me, who sold socks in a haberdashery shop, and he quit—threw up his job, and he made—lemme see, was it ten thousand dollars a year? On an acre of land, too."

"Ten thousand dollars? By Jove, Hodgson, that's two thousand pounds sterling; what? On an acre, you know.

If a chap had twenty acres—I say, old fellow, and fowls are no end easy to care for!”

That was the enthusiastic way they went into it. They asked the hotel clerk about chicken ranches in Arizona, but he was a little weak there. He had an idea it would be a good thing to be near the market, and New York was the big market. In half an hour the two young fellows were having a brandy and soda each, to bind the bargain. It was a settled thing that they would start in the chicken-ranch business if they could induce any one to part with so profitable a business for the means at their command. They were fortunate enough to find a man who had ten acres, and was not yet making ten thousand dollars an acre per year out of it. He explained this in various ways, a different way each time Hodgson and Wilkerson appeared at his place; but they knew why the chicken ranch had not been a success.

“The old chap is so bally unscientific, you know.”

But all this has nothing to do with the housekeeper, except in a general way, as the creation of the world might have something to do with the end of the world, being a necessary premonitory symptom. The housekeeper occurred a month or two later, when Hodgson and Wilkerson were in full possession of the ranch, and had eaten each other's cooking just once too often. Wilkerson broached the subject in the polite English manner.

“I cawn't eat any more of those nawsty messes you do up, you know, Hodgson, old chap. Rotten I call them. What?”

And Hodgson received the complaint calmly.

“I haven't eaten a bite for two days myself, Wilky. A beggar would shy at that filthy puddin' I scotched up this evenin', don't you know. Beastly prov I call it. Why, even the silly fowls wouldn't eat it.”

“They've got some sense, the fowls, you know,” said Wilkerson.

“A couple of fellows cawn't starve, you know,” said Hodgson sadly.

Wilkerson was smoking his pipe. He puffed thoughtfully.

“I've been thinkin' we would have to come to it, old man,” he said. “I'm glad you mentioned it.”

“What have I mentioned, Wilky?” asked Hodgson.

“Gettin' a bloomin' housekeeper,” said Wilkerson.

Hodgson had not mentioned it, but he made no comment. Both of the young men were bashful, as so many of those much-traveled Englishmen are. They were shy, and blushed easily and painfully, and both were thankful that the subject of a housekeeper had been broached so easily.

“She'll be some old dame,” said Hodgson. “I've my mind's eye on a widow person; a respectable old dame, you know. Black dress, and all that.”

“Or a woman with a husband,” suggested Wilkerson. “We could work the bally fellow about the place; what?”

“I'm not so keen about puddling about with the hens that I'd object to a man on the place,” said Hodgson. “Write out a bit to put in the paper, Wilky, that's a good fellow.”

“How's this?” said Wilkerson when he had struggled with pen and paper for an hour. “Two young Englishmen, recently embarking in a chicken-raising enterprise on Long Island, desire a housekeeper. Elderly widow, or woman with husband, who will work on the place, preferred. In the latter case, a man with experience in chicken raising greatly preferred.”

“Wouldn't you say something about eggs?” asked Hodgson.

“I had it in mind, Hodgy,” said Wilkerson, “but I couldn't get the thing in properly. I had it in ‘egg and chicken raising’; but we don't raise the eggs. The silly hens lay them.”

“And you can't say ‘Two young Englishmen recently embarking in the egg-laying and chicken-raising business,’ now, can you?” said Hodgson. “Sounds as if we laid the eggs; what?”

“And you can't say ‘egg and chicken business,’ like that, you know. They'd think we were shopkeepers; what? I

say. How would 'fowl ranch' do? Recently embarking in a fowl ranch."

"As if we had gone on board a bally boat of some sort!" said Hodgson. "Leave out the eggs, Wilky. The dames should know there are eggs where there are chickens, eh?"

Wilkerson thought deeply.

"By Jove, Hodgy," he said suddenly, "what matter would it be to the old dames whether we mentioned eggs or not? I can't see——"

They studied this aspect solemnly for some minutes, and decided that it would make no difference to the prospective housekeeper whatever. This is mentioned merely that you may know what these young men were like. They did nothing recklessly. They even herded their hens with circumspection, and treated them like perfect ladies. The only available answer to their letter came from Mrs. Druvinsky. Housekeepers seemed in no wild enthusiasm to accept positions on chicken ranches in far Long Island.

But Mrs. Druvinsky's letter left no doubt of her acceptability. She was a widow, she wrote, but she soon expected to be Mrs. Solinsky, and her intended was an old hand at the chicken game, and he would be glad to leave his close confinement in the city for the free life in the country. Her wage must be so much, and her husband's wage—when she acquired permanent rights in the husband—must be so much. Days off were mentioned and specified. She could cook, and felt amply able to care for the house of the chicken ranchers.

"Jolly good luck potting the old dame at the first shot; what?" said Hodgson. "We'll have her on."

"Right-o!" said Wilkerson; and in two days Mrs. Druvinsky was with them.

Wilkerson drove over to the station for her; and Hodgson did not go with him because there was room for but two in their cart. When the train pulled in, Wilkerson looked in vain for the old dame. No old dame had disembarked from the train; but a young dame had. She rushed up to Mr. Wilkerson and handed him her suit case.

"You're Wilkerson, ain't you?" she said. "Well, my name's Druvinsky—Dorothy Druvinsky."

Wilkerson looked at her out of the corner of his eye. He did not dare look a young woman directly in the face.

"Ah—ah——" he stammered. "Ah, your mother said nothing about a daughter, you know. I don't know whether we want a—a daughter. Hodgson has an objection to daughters, don't you know."

"Get out!" said Mrs. Druvinsky, in a businesslike tone. "I'm all the Mrs. Druvinsky there is. I'm her; understand? I'm the housekeeper."

"But—but we wanted an old dame, you know," stammered Wilkerson. "A widow, or—or an elderly person."

"All right. I'm a widow. And I'm getting older right along. Is that your horse? You can put my suit case right in."

"But, my dear lady!" Wilkerson began.

"Now, stop that!" said Mrs. Druvinsky, turning on him with set lips. "Don't you begin 'dearing' me! I'm not that sort, and you might as well know it right now."

"But, you know," Wilkerson began, and blushed.

He did not know how; but he had meant to inform this young person that it would be exceedingly improper for her to come to the ranch as housekeeper, and instead he found the young person upbraiding him for impropriety. It silenced him. Not for worlds would he have ventured on the delicate subject again.

"Hodgy will send her flying!" he assured himself, and allowed her to take the suit case from his hand and place it in the cart.

Certainly he could not grasp her skirts and pull her backward as she clambered into the cart. He was tempted to tell her to drive to the ranch alone; but the businesslike manner in which she sat erect in the cart made him feel that she would see through the flimsy maneuver as if it had been chicken netting, and he got in beside her and drove off.

The cart had two wheels, and joggled up and down frightfully, and the seat had no back. Mrs. Druvinsky put her hand behind Wilkerson, and grasped the edge of the seat to steady herself, but there was not the slightest suggestion of familiarity or flirtation in the proceeding. Her arm might have been an iron brace, and Wilkerson a wooden post. His opinion of the possibility of Mrs. Druvinsky as a housekeeper improved wonderfully on the drive to the ranch. She was not the flirty sort. She was business—strictly business.

But Hodgson, coming to the door as they arrived, had a greater shock than when one of his own edible snails bit him in Manchuria—he discovered afterward that a bee had stung him, and that the snail could not bite.

He did not burst into speech; his mouth opened too wide for that, and stayed too wide; but he fled to the farthest chicken pen, and remained there until Wilkerson came out and dragged him back to the house.

"But we can't have her! We can't have her!" he repeated over and over.

"Don't I bally well *know* it?" said Wilkerson. "It won't do at all, Hodgy! You've got to get rid of her."

"Really!" said Hodgy sarcastically. "You brought her. You send her about her business."

"Bless you!" said Wilky. "Haven't I tried it? She won't go for me. You must do it, Hodgy. Really, you must."

"Right-o, then!" said Hodgy firmly. They were eight chicken pens from the house, and he felt as brave as the tiger that ate ladies regularly for breakfast, dinner, and supper. "I'll give her her walking papers right smartly when we reach the house."

And he meant it. He walked into the kitchen with his head high, blushed, and walked out again. Mrs. Druvinsky had given him but one glance.

"Deuce take it, you know!" he said, after they had eaten a good dinner, and when he and Wilky were seated on the lawn as far from the house as they could get. "Did she look at you that way, Wilky?"

"Yes," said Wilky, and then added

quickly, and with just a hint of jealousy: "What way?"

"She looked at me," said Hodgy slowly; "and what she looked was this, as near as I can make it out in words: 'What, ho!' her look said. 'So you are in my kitchen to send me trotting, are you?' That's the first part of the look, Wilky. And the second part said: 'Well, my lad, and you are thinking it would be improper for me to be here, which is the same as thinking I'm improper myself, are you? Well, I dare you to say it to my face!' That was the second part. And the third part said: 'Get out of my kitchen!' And out I got, Wilky."

He looked up quickly, for a shadow was coming across the grass, and saw Mrs. Druvinsky approaching them. Wilkerson scrambled to his feet; but Hodgson grasped him by the hem of one trouser leg and retained him.

"She'll be asking where she is to sleep, Wilky," said Hodgson. "Don't go and leave me!"

But she did not ask. She told them. There was a wing of the house that, on the upper floor, communicated with the main body only through a narrow hallway, and there was a door, with a bolt and lock that closed this hallway. Mrs. Druvinsky told them she had preempted the wing. She said it in a matter-of-fact manner, as she might have announced that flour was needed the next day; and Wilkerson and Hodgson breathed freely. But only for a moment.

"Now," she said, "I want to say one word, and that is all. You men may think I'll stand for flirting, but I won't! I won't say anything about Mr. Hodgson coming into my kitchen this evening without being invited; but you'll both stay out of my kitchen. I expect to be married in a couple of weeks to Mr. Solinsky, and then everything will be all right; but until I am married I'm engaged, and I don't want you to try any flirting. I'll throw up the job in a minute if you do. That's all. I thought I'd tell you."

Hodgson, his mouth wider open than ever, watched her as she walked up the

slight incline to the house. Mrs. Druvinsky was about five feet seven inches in height, and well developed. She was, perhaps, twenty-two years of age, and her hair was black, and her eyes very dark brown, and her color high. But she was not handsome, according to the English standard. Her features were too Semitic, with a trace of the Kalmuck strain. Her hands were large, and so were her feet. She looked like a stout peasant woman.

"By Jove!" said Wilkerson.

But for the next two weeks they almost forgot their fears. Mrs. Druvinsky attended strictly to her duties as housekeeper, and proved fully competent.

"If we want to ship her," said Hodgson one day, "all you've to do, Wilky, is flirt with her. She said she'd go if we flirted with her."

"By Jove, Hodgy," said Wilkerson, "but I don't know how to flirt, you know."

"Neither do I, you know!" said Hodgson. "With an engaged woman."

Certainly they could not be accused of flirting during those two weeks. They lived in the open air, and as far from the house as the chicken netting allowed them to separate themselves. At night, about one o'clock, they stole cautiously into the house, slipped softly to their rooms, and when they took off their shoes they placed them on the floor more softly and gently than they handled eggs.

But at the end of the two weeks Mrs. Druvinsky gave them a shock. She returned from her afternoon off, and Wilkerson and Hodgson allowed her to walk from the station. Frankly, they were afraid of her. But she was not afraid of them. That was not her nature. She walked up the slope of the lawn, and espied Wilkerson and Hodgson, and made straight for them.

"Well," she said when she had cornered them, "we've got to make new arrangements. It is all off!"

"Ah, yes!" said Wilkerson. "Certainly! May I inquire what is off?"

A flood of joy thrilled him; no doubt she was going to leave.

"My engagement is off, that's what's off!" said Mrs. Druvinsky. "I gave Solinsky the bounce to-day. He's no good. No, he's no good at all."

"You'll be leaving us, then?" said Hodgy tremulously.

It seemed too good to be true. Neither was it true!

"Not much!" said Mrs. Druvinsky. "I like the place, and I'm going to stay. I only mentioned it because I thought you might be counting on Solinsky, and he ain't coming."

In the shadowy eve, when she had delivered this and left them, Wilkerson and Hodgson looked at each other.

"She'll be marrying one of us; what?" said Wilkerson. "Clever woman, that! She's the sort that will do what she sets her mind to do, Hodgy."

"I hope it isn't me," said Hodgson uncomfortably. "I don't want to marry the woman, you know. Pretty row my people would be making; what?"

"By Jove, I *won't* marry her!" said Wilkerson firmly. "I'll run off and leave the blessed fowls first!"

"You can't do that, Wilky," said Hodgson. "The incubator chicks will be out in a day or two. The poor little beggars would starve."

"Beastly idea of yours getting a widow," said Wilkerson; and the two men smoked silently and stared at the landscape of chicken pens.

Hodgson did not even resent the charge that he had suggested getting a widow. It was a beastly idea.

"If she comes any of that," said Hodgson, at length, "I'll tell her I've a wife in Manchuria."

Three days later, Mrs. Druvinsky appeared to be sitting on the little porch when Wilkerson and Hodgson returned from the far precincts of their ranch for dinner; and they rounded the house circumspectly to avoid her. They pushed open the kitchen door, and there was Mrs. Druvinsky. They retreated in confusion, and fled around the house again; but, as they came in sight of the house, Wilkerson stopped short and put out his hand to restrain Hodgson.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "There's two of them!"

Hodgson peeked around the edge of the house.

"What, ho!" he said dismally, and fell back in dismay.

They leaned against the side of the house, side by side, and puffed their pipes silently. From time to time they peeked at the porch. Hunger—good healthy hunger—was gnawing them, but they dared not approach the double of Mrs. Druvinsky, and they remained where they were until the widow clanged the dinner bell again. It clanged in an irritated, imperative manner, and Hodgy peeked around the edge of the house again.

"She's gone," he said, with unutterable relief, and cautiously they stole into the house and into the dining room; but there a new calamity awaited them.

The table was not set for two, but for three; and at the third place the new Druvinsky was already seated, awaiting them with a pert smile.

"I'm Mrs. Druvinsky's sister," she volunteered. "My name is Sophie Grunsky; but you can call me Sophie if you want to. I ain't particular."

Hodgson and Wilkerson stood in the doorway. Hodgson nearly filled it latitudinally, and Wilkerson extended from the floor to the top of the casing. It was a critical moment. Now, if ever, they must make a stand for their rights. They began by hiding their pipes quickly in their coat pockets. It was a poor beginning. It recognized a certain social equality in Miss Grunsky.

"Are—are you going to eat with us?" asked Hodgson.

"Well, you don't think I'd keep you waiting while I ate, do you?" said Miss Grunsky. "I ain't quite that fresh. I don't mind letting you eat with me. Sister says you ain't the fresh sort."

"Really!" said Hodgson. "I—I dare say we had better be seated, Wilkerson; what?"

"You don't mind my asking, do you," said Wilkerson when they had slipped into their seats, "but the customs of this land are so strange to us. Is it—is it customary for the—ah—the sister of

the housekeeper to sit at meat with the—ah—the people of the house, you know?"

He thought that was a crusher. It should have left Miss Grunsky nerveless and confused. It should have annihilated her—but it did not.

"I look at it this way," she said frankly. "Sister ain't a hired girl; she's housekeeper, and that's a high-toned job. If she was hired girl, I'd eat in the kitchen; but she's housekeeper, and I'm visiting the house she's keeping, so I eat, like a visitor, in the dining room."

"But—ah—your sister doesn't eat with us, you know," said Hodgson.

"Well, maybe it's because she's hired help," said Miss Grunsky. "I ain't your hired help, am I?"

"No; but don't you see—pardon me, but classes"—he said "clawsses"—"classes, you know! Now, if you are your sister's sister, you are of the same class, don't you see? A class is a class, isn't it?"

"If what you mean is that me and Gusta ought to eat in the same place, I guess she'll eat in here if I ask her to," said Miss Grunsky. "It wouldn't be nice for her to eat with you two fellows all alone. That's why she ain't done it."

"Ah—but you eat with us," suggested Wilkerson.

"That ain't the same," said Miss Grunsky. "I ain't eating alone with you. Gusta's in the kitchen."

Wilkerson and Hodgson looked at each other, trying to catch a glimmering of the logic of this; but their faces showed that it was a blank to them. They attacked their food silently.

"Gusta thought," said Miss Grunsky, "that it would be just as well to break you in right off with me, so you'd be used to company when her guests come out."

Wilkerson laid down his knife and fork. Hodgson held his suspended in the air. Both stared at Miss Grunsky open-mouthed.

"Guests!" they ejaculated simultaneously.

"Of course, she didn't have any out while she was engaged to that Solinsky fellow," said Miss Grunsky, "because

she was engaged to him. But she wouldn't ever get married now if she didn't see company. She's got to have some boys and girls come out—young fellows and girls," she explained.

"Really!" said Wilkerson.

"When the fellows see how she can cook and run a house," said Miss Grunsky, "she won't have no trouble in picking one of them off."

"By Jove!" said Hodgson.

And then they ate. What else could they do?

"You know," said Hodgson when they had walked to the incubator house after dinner, "the woman's not setting her cap for us, after all. That's some relief."

"It is," agreed Wilkerson. "I was minded to have some chap at home write me a letter—from my 'wife,' you know. But it is going to be deuced annoying having a lot of chaps and girls about the place, don't you think?"

"Infernal nuisance!" said Hodgson. "They're not our kind at all. Common sort, don't you think?"

"Why, a man's home is not his own in this bally country!" said Wilkerson.

"Fancy being hosts for a lot of bounders, and petty clerks, and their Sallies!" said Hodgson. "We're not running a matrimonial agency for our housekeeper, are we, Wilky?"

"Demmed if I know what we are doing, Hodgy," said Wilkerson sadly. "It looks as if we were settin' up an inn for friends of housekeepers. I say get rid of the whole bloomin' lot of Druvinskys!"

Easy to say!

The next few weeks brought friends of Druvinskys by the score. There were direct friends of Mrs. Druvinsky, and direct friends of Miss Grunsky, and a few direct friends of the late Mr. Druvinsky, and numerous direct friends of Mr. Solinsky, and friends of these friends, and cousins that were not friends of any one in particular, but merely connected by marriage. They did not all come at one time. They came in squads, and left the gates of the chicken yards open.

Mrs. Druvinsky became quite another

person. She had been severe; now she overflowed with life and made merry with the merriest. It was evident that what she had needed was a little society. There was no longer any need of repression, and she expanded. There were always two or three young Grunskys to wash the dishes and do the cooking; and Mrs. Druvinsky assumed the real position of housekeeper as she understood it. She sat on the small porch with a novel, and chaffed the male friends of the late Druvinsky, kicking them playfully in the back as they sat on the steps below her when they "got too gay."

Through this, or about its edges, the two chicken ranchers moved with glum faces; and it is no wonder that Mrs. Druvinsky felt they were twin skeletons at her feast of pleasure.

"Look here," she said one day when they had sat silently through a particularly boisterous meal, "you boys have got to brace up. You act like you was both sick, and it ain't pleasant for me nor for my friends. I don't know what's the matter with you. If this ranch ain't making money it ain't my fault. I don't run it; but it's raw to show it before my friends. If you can't act sociable at the table when there is company, a change has got to be made."

"Quite so!" said Hodgson approvingly.

"We got to eat separate," said Mrs. Druvinsky.

"Just so," said Wilkerson heartily.

"So," said Mrs. Druvinsky, patting the front of her pompadour, "if you two don't take a brace and act like gen'l'men to my friends, I'll set a table for you in the kitchen."

The two young men stared after her as she turned and walked away.

"Fawncy!" exclaimed Hodgson.

"Really, you know!" said Wilkerson weakly. "In the kitchen, by Jove!"

But it happened just that way. They ate in the kitchen. Mrs. Druvinsky's friends came when they chose, made merry, and departed when they chose. Sometimes a young Grunsky drove the cart, and sometimes the parties walked to and from the station. Wilkerson and

Hodgson found it more comfortable to eat in the kitchen than to be the subjects of the Druvinsky friends' style of witticisms and table talk.

They were eating in peace one day when Mrs. Druvinsky came to the kitchen and seated herself beside them.

"Them roughs in there make my head ache," she said. "I'm going to eat out here."

"But—ah," said Wilkerson; "ah—ah—ain't one of them the chap you—ah—fancied you——"

"Might take on as a husband?" said Mrs. Druvinsky frankly. "Well, Sophie must have been blabbing to you; but I don't mind saying she was telling the truth. But I've give that idea up. Between you an' me them fellows ain't gen'l'men! I'm going to marry a gen'l'man, or nobody."

Wilkerson trembled. Hodgson looked toward the door.

"And I've got my mind made up," said Mrs. Druvinsky affably. "I like living on this chicken farm. I want to stay here. You fellows don't know just how to act right; but you ain't bad sorts. If I was to marry one of them city fellows in there, I'd have to go back to town, and I ain't going to do it."

"My wife," Wilkerson began nervously; but Mrs. Druvinsky stopped him.

"Now, don't call me that," she said. "It ain't no use. I seen right along that both you boys was making eyes at me, but it ain't no use. I've got a sociable nature, and you two don't know the first thing about making company feel at home. You make folks feel like they wasn't wanted around. I dare say you try the best you know how; but you wasn't brought up right. You ain't in the society class."

"Really!" said Wilkerson faintly.

"All I want to ask you," said Mrs. Druvinsky appealingly, "is to try to be decent to Mr. Solinsky when he comes out next week. I'm going to marry him, after all; but if you scare him away by saying anything about jail, I don't know what he'll do. He's got tender feelings."

"Jail?" said Hodgson.

"He's been in jail for six months,"

said Mrs. Druvinsky; "but you needn't say anything about it to him. It ain't necessary. He feels it enough now."

"But we can't have a jailbird about the place, you know," said Wilkerson. "Really, we can't!"

"That's all right," said Mrs. Druvinsky. "He wasn't guilty. It was a mistake. The judge had it in for him. Abe and the jay he was working for had a difference of opinion about wages coming to Abe, and he drove off with a load of chickens, and they caught him when he was selling them. There wasn't nothing to it. He'll be a right good man about the place. He knows all about chickens."

"But I say!" exclaimed Hodgson. "A chicken thief on a chicken ranch, you know!"

"If you was a gen'l'man, Mr. Hodgson," said Mrs. Druvinsky, rising haughtily, "you wouldn't speak of her financy to a lady in them terms. I must say my patience is about done for! Goodness knows a lady has enough to put up with, living 'way out here in nowhere, without a soul for company, and I have stood it just because you was so helpless. Time and again I've wanted to throw up the job and get back to town. It's hard enough for a lady to stay when she sees two men moping around day after day, love sick, and so jealous of each other they won't speak a word. If I hadn't been sure I knew how to take care of myself I'd have gone long ago; but I stayed on as a favor to you. But I won't stand it to hear my financy called a chicken thief. No, I won't stand it! Some things a lady won't put up with."

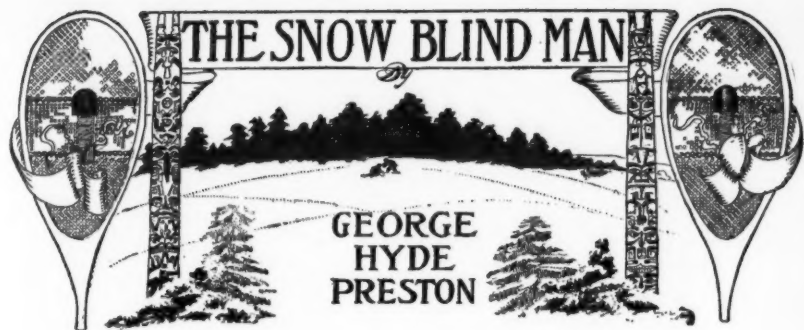
The faces of Wilkerson and Hodgson became cheerful for the first time in weeks.

"Are you meaning that you are going to leave us, Mrs. Druvinsky?" asked Wilkerson, suppressing his elation.

"No, I don't!" said Mrs. Druvinsky. "I mean that me and Solinsky are going to make you a proposition to buy out this chicken farm."

"By Jove!" said Hodgson. "We accept it! What is it?"

"Right-o!" said Wilkerson happily.



I WONDER if I can make it?" Davis asked himself. "It is a long ways to the Kuyukuk, and I've got mighty little grub to go on, but it's my only chance," he muttered, as he pushed along northward through the timber.

His even, rapid stride showed that he was at home on snowshoes.

From time to time he glanced back over his shoulder without slackening his pace.

"I am traveling light—mighty light," he said grimly, "and they will have to hustle if they get me; but these cussed snowshoe tracks are as good as a sign-board to the crowd that is after me," he added frowningly. "It is just a question of keeping ahead of them and tiring them out. If I can make it over to the Kuyukuk, I can find grub at Billy's, and Billy will stand by me, too."

Davis had now reached the edge of the timber, and glanced northward across the wide, snow-covered plain that reflected the spring sun in a glaring, white dazzle.

Suddenly he stopped stock-still, and shaded his eyes with his hand.

"By thunder!" he exclaimed. "It's a man! They have headed me off. I guess it has come to the show-down," he added coolly. "He has a gun, too; and that's where he has got the best of me."

Davis brushed his hand across his eyes.

"Confound the glare!" he ejaculated. "It makes things look wabbly.

What is the matter with the fellow? He staggers as if he was drunk. Something is up. He gropes around like—by thunder, that's it! He is snow-blind! Well," commented Davis coolly, "there ain't much harm in him for a while, no matter who he is."

Davis went forward toward the staggering figure, and then stepped aside, and in silence watched the man walk blindly by, muttering as he went. He passed so close that Davis could have touched him. He was covered with snow. It was evident that he had fallen more than once.

"Blind as a bat," nodded Davis. "I never saw him before. Perhaps he ain't after me. What was he saying? It sounded like cussing—or praying. Well, he better. He needs to in his fix. It seems mighty tough not to help him, but I just can't," he muttered, with an apprehensive glance toward the south. "Every minute counts with me, and it means my life if I am caught. He will sure cave in soon, but it is him or me, and I have got to look out for myself. I ain't in shape to load myself up with a blind man. He will never know that he passed me," added Davis, glancing back at him.

Just then the man stumbled and fell. Entangled in his snowshoes, he struggled weakly for a moment, and then, raising his head, he cried out—the bitter cry of utter helplessness and despair. Then his head sank back upon the snow.

Davis turned from him and started forward on his way, his face set like flint.

"I must go on," he muttered, "I must. Like as not, the man was hunting me," he justified himself. "If he was, he is getting what's coming to him, all right; but if he wasn't—"

Davis paused and looked irresolutely back at the huddled shape on the snow, and then started on again with a shake of his head.

"But if he wasn't!" The words seemed to ring in Davis' ears. Suddenly he stopped.

"I just can't do it!" he ejaculated. "I just can't leave a man like that!"

He turned and went swiftly back.

"Hello, pardner!" he cried, bending over the fallen man. "What's the trouble?"

The man stumbled a little, and stretched out a groping hand.

"Am I dreaming," he muttered, "or is it a miracle?"

"No, it's just a darn fool," responded Davis roughly. "Come, get up. If you can travel, I'll help you. If you can't, I'll have to leave you, because I've got no time to waste."

With Davis' help, the man got to his feet.

"Yes, I can travel," he answered shakily, "if you will help me. I have been for hours trying to find my way back to camp; but all I did was go round and round, and come in on my own trail again and again, getting nowhere. When I fell this time, I lost my nerve, I guess. It didn't seem any use to keep on struggling. If it had not been for you—"

"Where is your camp?" cut in Davis.

"I don't know where we are. I have wandered around a lot, and I think I was half off my head some of the time."

"Well," rejoiced Davis, "we are in a barren stretch of country, with timber close by to the south, and a range of low hills some way off to the north."

"My camp is in a gulch just at the edge of those hills," returned the man. "I was crossing the barren stretch when everything went black. I have been on the trail a good deal lately. My eyes

had been bothering me, but I did not think that it was anything much. They are weak, anyway."

"Well, I've got no time to lose," said Davis sharply. "Catch hold of the end of this pack strap. Here it is. I'll go ahead and break trail. All you have to do is hang onto the strap and keep your legs moving—and moving fast," he added, with another glance toward the south. "I'll carry your gun. When we get near enough, I can spot your trail coming out of the hills, and then it will be dead easy to find your camp."

"It was big luck that you came along," said the man gratefully.

"Yes—for you," answered Davis curtly.

The two men went along in silence for a time.

"What are you doing up here?" asked Davis finally.

"Hunting."

"Any luck?"

"Not much."

"How long have you been here?"

"About two weeks."

"Seen anybody around?"

"No."

The man stumbled a little, and groaned.

"Eyes hurt some?" asked Davis.

"Like the devil."

"Why didn't you put something over them?"

"I did, and then I fell down and lost the handkerchief in the snow, and couldn't find it."

"Here is mine. Bind them up. You have got to keep the light out if you expect them to get well."

The man began awkwardly knotting the handkerchief around his head.

"Come, hurry up!" exclaimed Davis irritably. "Now get a move on," he added, pulling hard at the strap. "I've got to hustle, I tell you."

Davis strode on, and the man lurched blindly after him, hanging to the strap.

They were now nearing the hills.

"The whole place is full of your cross trails," ejaculated Davis. "You have circled round like— Hello," he broke off, "I see where you came out of the gulch. Keep moving lively now,"

he ordered, pulling viciously at the strap, "and you will soon be in out of this cussed glare."

In a few moments more they had reached the gulch.

"How far up is your camp?" asked Davis.

"Just a couple of hundred feet. It is an old cabin that I happened upon."

"I see it," exclaimed Davis. "Tumble-down old shack. Thrown together by some trapper, I guess."

"Like enough," assented the man.

When they reached the cabin, Davis pushed open the door, and they went in.

"Now I will start a fire for you and put things where you can get them easy," he said, "and then you must shift for yourself. I've got to get on."

"You are not going to leave me here alone, blind, like this!" exclaimed the man.

"You won't be alone long," returned Davis grimly. "Now, look here, pardner," he went on, "I've put myself out some bringing you in from out there."

"You have saved my life," returned the man quickly.

"Then help me save mine. There will be men along here, maybe to-morrow, maybe to-day, maybe within an hour. It depends on how fast they are coming. They are hunting me. They will tell you that I killed a man back there on the river. I didn't; but he was killed the same night that I left his cabin after threatening that I would kill him. Maybe I would have shot the cur if somebody else had not taken the job off my hands. You can see the shape I was left in. Some of his friends had heard me making the threats. What show did I have? Sam Mecken was mighty well liked by them that didn't know him too well. They wanted to string me up, but finally decided to send upriver for the marshal and turn me over to him."

"Wasn't there any evidence to help you out?" asked the man. "Didn't they suspect any one else?"

"No, they were satisfied that I did it, all right, and things sure did look mighty bad for me."

The man nodded.

"Well," went on Davis, "one night

my chance came. I escaped, without a gun and with mighty little grub. I have got some start of them. I don't know how much. Maybe it's mighty little," he went on rapidly. "Now, when they jump in on you, just say you made all these tracks around here yourself. That you ain't seen anybody at all."

"I can say that, all right," answered the man, with a wince of pain. "I haven't."

"That's no lie," returned Davis, with a grim laugh. "Well, I'm off."

"Wait!" pleaded the man. "Don't leave me like this. They will miss the cabin like as not, and then you can double back behind them."

"Miss it with all these tracks leading straight to the door!" scoffed Davis. "Not much! I am off."

"For Heaven's sake, don't leave me here like this," pleaded the man. "I have only a little grub left. I can't see to shoot. I can't see to travel alone. If they should miss the cabin, I will die here like a blind rat in a trap!"

"What do you want me to do?" demanded Davis fiercely. "Stay here till they come up on me?"

"No, take me with you."

He had groped his way to Davis, and was clinging to him.

"Take me, take me!" he cried, as Davis tried to push him off. "I'll travel hard," he went on rapidly. "I'll divide my grub with you, I'll—"

"You are crazy to ask me to burden myself with you! There will be a dozen men in this cabin before you have had time to eat half your grub."

"But if they should miss the cabin, and then run you down when—"

There was a sudden noise outside.

Davis started back with an oath.

"Well, I won't leave you," he said grimly, "if that is any comfort to you. While we have been talking about it I have lost my chance. They are at the door! Roll under the bunk there out of harm's way," he ordered, pushing him sharply. "Where is that gun? If they hang me, it will be for something now!"

The blind man lurched forward sud-

denly and seized Davis around the waist.

"Don't shoot!" he exclaimed. "Don't shoot! I will not let you shoot!" he cried desperately as Davis struggled to free himself.

As they fought back and forth across the cabin, the door was burst open, and Davis was seized by half a dozen hands.

"You have got me, boys," he said coolly. "With the aid of that cur there," he added, pointing at the snow-blind man, who stood panting heavily.

"I didn't know that you was foxy enough to send a stool pigeon on ahead, Pete," went on Davis, turning to one of the group of his pursuers.

"I don't know what you are driving at, Davis," answered Pete. "I never saw the man before."

"The devil you didn't!" scoffed Davis. "And I thought he was snow-blind, and towed him in here at the end of a pack strap," he added, with a harsh laugh. "He worked me fine! If you will lend me your gun for a minute, Pete, I'll give you a chance to take me back for a sure-enough killing."

"I reckon we have got enough against you as it is," answered Pete dryly.

"I see that you are all here except the marshal," said Davis, with a sour smile.

"He is sick, upriver," answered Pete, "but I reckon we can hold you till he comes—this time. Got anything you want to do before we start back?"

"Nothing except blow the head off that snow-blind reptile," answered Davis, with an oath; "and you won't let me do that."

"Well, come on, then. We'll be moving."

"Wait a minute, gentlemen," said the snow-blind man, groping forward. "I have something to say. What are you taking this man back for?"

"For the murder of Sam Mecken," answered Pete bluntly.

"Are any of you officers of the law?"

"No, but we are Alaska miners, and that's enough authority up here—that and our guns—for taking back a man

for killing as good a fellow and as good a friend of ours as Sam."

"Yes, of course. I just wanted to know."

"Now, what have you got to say?" demanded Pete.

"Well, for one thing, that you are taking back the wrong man."

A grim smile went around the group that surrounded Davis.

"The blazes we are!" said Pete. "Who are you, anyhow?"

"I'll tell you when I get through, if you want to know; but for now just call it that I am the snow-blind man."

Pete nodded.

"Well," he said curtly, "since you are so cocksure about Davis, likely you know who did do the killing?"

"Yes—I know," answered the snow-blind man quietly.

"Who was it?" demanded Pete.

"I'll tell you that, too, when I get through—if you want to know," he replied slowly; "but first I would like to tell you a little something about him."

"All right," returned Pete, "if the boys are willing."

There was a general nod of assent, and the group crowded forward a little.

"Well," said the snow-blind man, in an even, emotionless voice, "the man who did the killing had a wife. They lived in Denver. She was young and pretty—and willful sometimes. That was part of the reason he loved her so much, I think. He was a quiet sort of fellow himself. Maybe he was too quiet. She loved life. He thought about that afterward. A year ago, just about this time, Sam Mecken came along. He had an easy-mannered, taking sort of way with him—good-looking, too. But you men knew him. I don't need to tell you. Her husband liked him, and he came to the house pretty often."

"It was a nice little house in a part of the town she picked out," went on the snow-blind man, half to himself. "There was only one more payment to make on it, and her husband was working extra hard just then, and putting in a lot of overtime evenings, to get the money together for it. Well, one

night he came home late. The house was dark. She was not there. He found a letter on the bureau in their room saying that she had gone with Sam Mecken. It was the last letter that he ever received from her except one."

The snow-blind man paused. Some one in the listening group coughed and stirred uneasily, but no one spoke.

"The letter told about—about some things that her husband had not done," the man went on finally. "Little things that he never thought about doing. He just took them for granted. He thought she knew how he felt. But women don't, always."

He paused again, and then went on:

"He did not know where they had gone, and he would not have done anything if he had. There was nothing to do that would not have hurt her. He just went on living in the house by himself. Along last fall he received another letter from her—the last one. It was written from Seattle. Mecken had left her. She was not well, and she was a drag on him, you see. She was never very strong. He wanted to go to Alaska. He gave her twenty dollars when he went."

Some one in the group swore under his breath.

"She did not know very much about any kind of work, and she was not strong enough to do much, anyway. Things got pretty bad with her, and she was all alone. She kept up as long as she could, but one day the people who had the room next to hers in the lodging house where she was living heard the noise of a fall, and found her

lying on the floor in a faint. They got a doctor for her. He did what he could, but she had no strength left to fight with. When he told her what was coming, she wrote the letter. Her husband telegraphed her money, and that he was on the way, but she never got his message, for, when he reached Seattle, he found that she had died before he received her letter. They had buried her—where they bury people who have no money and no friends."

For a moment the cabin was silent.

"Gentlemen," asked the snow-blind man finally, "shall I tell you the name of the man who killed Sam Mecken?"

There was a confused murmur among the group, and Pete put out his arms as if to fend something off.

"No, don't!" he exclaimed, with something between an oath and a sob in his voice. "We ain't officers of the law. We ain't got no call to find out the name of the man who killed the brute. He can go in peace, for all of us," he added solemnly. "Can't he, boys?"

The group nodded.

"Davis," went on Pete, after a moment, "we misjudged you. We ask your pardon. Will you go back to camp with us? The boys would be mighty glad to have you."

Davis shook his head.

"No, I can't right now," he said. "You boys ain't done all the misjudging, Pete," he added huskily.

Then, turning, he put his hand on the shoulder of the snow-blind man.

"Pardner," he said, "if you will let me, I am going to stay right by and see you through."



GIVE & TAKE



Edna Kingsley Wallace

MY name is George Gordon, and I'm fairly good-looking, except that my mouth and my hands and feet are too large. However, I'd rather they were too large than too small. I may add that ordinarily I am a cave man, and go after what I want by an air line. But when I came to the wooing of Mabel Wright, I found myself involved in civilization, sophistication, and circumlocution.

The moment I saw Mabel, at one of the club germans, in ruffles and swaddlings of raspberry ice, with some sort of an arts and crafts dingle-dangle hanging round her white throat, and a wreath of how-to-find-the-wild-flowers peeping out of her golden fuzz, I had a feeling of predestination. She measured right up to specifications.

You see, having three sisters, each thinner than the others, I had made up my mind that I would never marry any girl who hadn't a good plump neck and curly hair. I had had all I wanted of drinking my morning coffee opposite scrawny persons with stringy, wispy hair. The negligees girls affect in the morning are awfully hard on scrawns.

Now, Mabel is plump and curly, and has dimples, even in her elbows. I used to have an idea that all women's elbows were dimpled, except my sisters', but the era of elbow sleeves has left me a disillusioned man. You may imagine that when I found Mabel's disposition to be plump and dimpled also, and her little ways as curly as her hair,

and that, in short, she was Mabel, and I wanted her, I lost no time in displaying my own attractions as a connoisseur of corsage bouquets, chocolates, amusing shows, and places to have tea. It is no use to take a girl to tea at a quiet place. What she wants is a sense that all the really important people in town are there, wondering who that stunning blonde in brown velvet is—there, with the smart-looking chap who wears a frock coat so well.

Mabel came right up to all this, and seemed to like me, but whenever, in the seclusion of the library or the music room, or wherever else there weren't any elderlies, I fetched a long sigh, and reached for Mabel's hand, she slipped out from under with what I am afraid was the facility of long practice. You can't make love effectively to a girl on the other side of the room, a reflection which consoled me only when I remembered that such dexterity stood for unspoiled freshness.

When I heard that Mabel had sprained her ankle, I am afraid my first thought was the selfish one that now she wouldn't be able to get away. But I had reckoned without Mabel's guileless, blue-eyed, innocent sophistication. I found her stretched out on a divan, surrounded by as many flowers as if it had been her funeral, but looking satisfactorily rosy in some sort of sky-blue contraption that matched her eyes. Drawing a chair up beside her, I took her hand, and held it while I told her how sorry I was. This moment I artful-

ly prolonged by examining a turquoise ring she wore, but the minute I sighed and looked blightedly at Mabel, she rang for tea.

Instantly a maid popped in, like a Jill-in-the-box, and it was a case of hands up.

When we had finished tea, I reached for her hand again. A spasm crossed her face.

"Oh," she murmured faintly, "I must have my position changed. Please ring for Bennett."

"Let me do it," I urged, but she was obdurate. Bennett knew just how. Wherefore I was obliged to grind my teeth, while fat, pie-faced Bennett popped his shirt front lifting Mabel in his confounded arms to the desired position.

When later I tried again to show my sympathy, she suddenly started up with this: "Oh, I wonder whether mother sent my regrets for the Merwin dinner! I must see at once."

That settled it. I rose stiffly, said good-by, and stalked out. Glancing back, however, I could see that Mabel's face was all crinkled up with amusement.

I went down to the club, and boxed the stuffing out of Billy Williams, whom I'd never been able to down before.

One afternoon a few weeks later, I dropped in for tea with Mabel, and, as there was nothing else doing that evening, her mother, who understands me, asked me to stay on to dinner, and afterward made herself scarce. Mabel and I drifted into the music room, and when she went to the piano I took a firm resolve. Without any preliminaries of approach, I went up behind her, and, putting my arms around from behind, lifted her hands off the keys and held them tightly.

"Mabel," I said, without preamble, "I love you so much that I have to be rude. Can you care? And will you marry me?"

This may seem brutally abrupt, but, after all, as I said before, I am only a simple cave man, and my methods are always as little circuitous as circumstances will justify.

What do you think she did? She crumpled up, and cried as if her heart would break—not on my shoulder, but leaning forward on the piano keys with a crash.

Being nonplused, I maintained a masterly inactivity. When a woman cries, there is no use in trying to get anything out of her until she has reached the point of remembering that her eyes and nose will be red if she doesn't stop. By the time she has found her wisp of a handkerchief inadequate, it becomes possible to get sense out of her.

When this inevitable point was reached, I said: "What is it, little girl? You don't hate me?"

She shook her head doubtfully.

"No, I don't hate you, but I think I hate it."

"It?" I repeated in bewilderment. "What?"

"Getting married," she sobbed, "and leaving home, and having to—and maybe—I don't want to!" she wailed.

An idea struck me. "Are you afraid, dear?"

"Yes," she whispered. "Don't speak of it for ever so long. You won't?"

"But you do love me a little, don't you?" I urged.

"I don't know," she confessed. "Sometimes I think I do—but"—her tone grew hysterical again—"I won't marry anybody for years!"

And that was all I could get out of her. After all, she was only twenty, and the line she took made me feel as if she thought I wanted to put her in jail.

My heart sank when I heard that Mabel and her mother were going to spend the summer in Europe, where girl eaters range the social jungle. Nevertheless, she came back in the fall apparently free, and healthy, and happy, and I hoped a little nearer to a reasonable frame of mind. It was no use. The moment I showed signs of sentiment she laughed like the tricky imp she is.

Not long afterward we were both at a week-end party on Long Island, at which our hostess' mother was so suspiciously careful that there was about as much chance for a real tête-à-tête as

there would be in a football scrimmage. But one night at dinner I was next to Mabel, and, when the nuts arrived on the scene, kind Providence slipped me one of those vegetable twins known as a philopena.

Now, Mabel had been flirting outrageously with one of those old butterfly beaux who are always to be found investigating the charms of sweet-and-twenty; and, because he was wise in the ways of women, Mabel was much exhilarated, and felt worldly and competent. That was probably the reason she shared my philopena on the terms I suggested.

"Give or take," I said, looking steadily into her eyes. "Whoever gives or takes unconsciously loses. If I lose, not a word from me for three months about—you know what. If you lose, I am to take every opportunity I can. Until the philopena is settled, neutrality. That is fair, isn't it?"

She gave me gaze for gaze; then with a queer little smile she answered: "Done! I accept."

Mabel has in her the making of an exceedingly good sport.

It may well be imagined that I resorted to every ruse I could think of to entrap her, but she was on her mettle, and seemed to have the matter constantly in mind. I was equally on guard. She offered me tea, and sandwiches, and bonbons, and gloves, and hand bags, and parcels. But I was uncompromisingly rude, and the butt of the witticisms of the other men. Of course every one saw the game, but nobody knew the forfeits. I stood alone. The men tried to help Mabel for chivalry's sake, and the girls from sex loyalty.

Back to town we went, with the matter still unsettled, and I wondered if I hadn't been fifty-seven varieties of fool, idiot, and blockhead, to put a premium on Mabel's elusiveness. Our conversation when we met was chiefly a rapid, nervous monologue on Mabel's part, and a series of grunts on mine, because, in spite of my most astute efforts, I couldn't catch her in the only way which would restore to me my favorite subject of discussion when with her.

Now, I am not artistic, beyond liking a good tune. In spite of the dutiful miles of galleries I have done in Europe with mother and the girls, I don't know a Millet from a Rembrandt, and don't want to. As for poetry, of course it is all right, if you understand it. If you don't, there's no use pretending. Nevertheless I live in a studio, because lots of fellows do, and it seems rather the thing. I like the high ceilings, and the gold stuff on my walls, and the space, and the freedom. Of course lots of studios are merely apartments which are cheap because they furnish all the inconveniences, but mine isn't that kind. It is big, and roomy, and uncluttered, and there is a house valet to do what you want when you want it, instead of a personal fixture who is always under foot.

Into the studio over mine there moved, oddly enough, a highbrow cousin of Mabel's, a painter of bony, green females, who if they had an ounce of sense would shroud themselves from neck to heels before allowing themselves to be immortalized by Horace Ladd. However, it will be seen that Horace has his place in the cosmos.

One day the lock of my door having gone out of business, I set off in quest of a locksmith around the corner. It seemed safe enough in the middle of the afternoon to leave the place for the few moments necessary for the errand.

When I returned the door was ajar, and I heard some one moving about inside. I looked in, and thought for a moment that my fixed idea had done its fatal work. There was Mabel, in black velvet, with a swirly hat, arranging my tea table, and humming a little French song. I believed neither my eyes nor my ears. My heart leaped like a trout.

"Mabel!" I gasped, with hospitable enthusiasm. It was not for me to question miracles. I think I took both her hands.

"How do you do?" she inquired placidly. "I'm making myself very much at home in Horrie's absence, you see. I can't think where he can be."

I opened my mouth to speak, but no sound came. The picture of Mabel

making herself at home with my Japanese tea set struck me dumb. Why had I never thought to ask her to tea here? It was enchanting.

"Won't you sit down?" she pursued, with a twinkle. "Do. I'm sure Horace will be back in a few moments. I came to see a new picture he is doing, but I don't see a sign of any. I dare say they are behind that curtain. Horrie always was an old maid for neatness and order. Most inartistic of him to be like that, don't you think?"

It was clear that Mabel thought she was in her cousin's studio dispensing his hospitality.

She went on talking. "Why don't you have an elevator in this building? I climbed and climbed until I gasped. When I climb so many flights, I'm always afraid I'll lose track of the number. I hope you're not shocked at my having tea with Horrie unchaperoned, but you see he's my very first cousin."

She lighted the lamp under the teakettle.

"Shocked? Certainly not," I replied politely, "and besides, I don't exactly see you having tea with Horace unchaperoned. I had a notion he was out, and that it was I with whom you were having tea."

She stiffened. "I wonder where he can be."

She fussed and twiddled with the tea things until the kettle boiled and the tea was made. I talked assiduously and exhaustively about the weather, past, present, and to come.

After I had refused my cup of tea at her hands, she put it down on the table, and I picked it up.

Again she wondered audibly and uneasily why Horace didn't come. I had an impulse to tell her that I thought he might very probably be snapping his watch impatiently in the studio above, but restrained myself. I hated to embarrass her.

"I've never been here before," she volunteered. "Somehow I supposed there would be pictures about, and easels, and things. Where do you suppose he keeps them? Perhaps it is good form to have your place look

modest and conventional." She sniffed daintily. "It smells rather strong of tobacco, doesn't it? Horrid stuff!"

My heart sank. Should I never be able to inure her to the elysian odor of tobacco? If not—but just then she peered into the teakettle with such a housewifery air that I forthwith resigned myself to the necessity of a den when we were married—a den with black woodwork, crimson walls, a wood fire, and—

Mabel broke the silence by saying determinedly:

"I came by the subway. Isn't it funny to see plenty of room in those cars? There were only women coming downtown to teas, and not many of them. It's so windy, don't you know. It seems like March. I hate to have the months play puss in the corner, don't you?"

I nodded, and stirred my tea.

"Your loquacity," she went on severely, "suggests either grumps or nerves."

"Talkativeness is apt to be a symptom of nerves," I admitted, with subtle emphasis, "but it has the merit of saving the other fellow the necessity of beating his brains for something to say."

She flushed, and said in a tone of repressed fury:

"If Horace doesn't come immediately I shall go. It is ridiculous—being kept waiting like this."

"When there are so many things one is pledged not to say," I proceeded, as if she had not spoken, "one is seriously handicapped."

She eyed me carefully.

"Since you find it so difficult to talk to me, I think I shall write a note I forgot about." She turned to my desk.

"Let me clear it for you," I ejaculated hastily, leaping to my feet, to her evident surprise.

But Heaven only knew what might be on that desk to give me away. However, one of my rare impulses to put things away had overtaken me only the night before, and nothing incriminating was in sight.

Mabel pulled out some paper, and exclaimed:

"Why, this paper is just like yours, even to the address. But of course you live in this same building."

"Yes," I murmured, and felt on my forehead the coming of the dew.

She peered into an open compartment, and again came an exclamation:

"I don't remember giving Horace that picture of me. How nice of him to put it where he can see it without its being conspicuous!"

Cautiously I drew a long breath, and said nothing.

Mabel's pen scratched. That is to say, my pen in Mabel's hand. I drank my tea, and wondered what sort of cataclysm there would be when Mabel found out. Suddenly a thought struck me, and I snorted. Like a flash, she turned, and caught me hastily putting away a grin.

"I beg your pardon," I said meekly. "I choked on this confounded biscuit."

She eyed me suspiciously, lifted her expressive eyebrows, and went on writing. When she had finished she went to the telephone, called for a messenger, and sat down to wait. She picked up a book, flipped it open, and said scornfully:

"I wonder when Horace began to take an interest in big-game hunting. Aniseed is more in his line."

It's funny the way women begin to pick a man to pieces for everything they can think of when they are annoyed with him.

"Mabel," I ventured, "will you give me your attention for a little while?"

She considered it.

"I can't give you anything, of course," she gleamed, "but I'll lend you my ears if that will do."

I looked as solemn as a head waiter. "Tell me what is good for sore throat," I said, swallowing.

She sat up, very alert and anxious.

"Why, George, you must gargle it right away with hot salt water." She poured some hot water into a cup, and rose uncertainly. "I wonder where Horace keeps his salt, if he has any."

"I'll see," I offered vaguely, and went to get it. My throat really was sore, and getting worse.

"You seem to know your way about here," she commented. "I didn't know that you and Horace hit it off."

"Oh, naturally I know the place well," I ventured. "You see, it is exactly like mine."

It began to be borne in upon me that I was piling up fuel of a very inflammable nature for the fires of her wrath when they should begin to blaze, and that they would undoubtedly produce very hot water, in which I should have to struggle for my life. The prospect did not allure me. But having accepted the situation at first, the really happy moment for precipitating myself into the hot water aforesaid had not seemed to present itself.

There was a thump upon the door, and Mabel looked at me rather disturbed.

"It can't be Horace," she said doubtfully, "because he would walk in."

I went to the door. It was my locksmith.

"Gordon?" he bawled cheerfully.

Before I could reply, his eye lit upon the latch socket, and he said:

"Oh, I see. Don't wonder there was trouble. This here wood's rotten, and the whole thing has slipped crooked. I'll just take off this here, and we'll get some wood to put in. If you'd 'a' told me the wood was rotten, I'd 'a' brought some along."

"Go ahead," I said curtly, breathing unprintable words to myself.

When I turned again to Mabel, she was staring at me in perplexity. Seeing no way of explaining, I said:

"It's a wonder Ladd wouldn't come and see to these little household stunts himself."

"I thought he said Gordon," Mabel looked at me very hard.

"He did," I answered brazenly. "You see, he—er—he knows me, and calls me by name."

Mabel looked as if she believed either herself or me to be getting softening of the brain.

"I say, Gordon," came a voice from the doorway, "are you there?" It was Horace Ladd. Mabel was out of his

range of vision. "Have you seen anything of Mabel? She was coming to tea with me."

"Why, Horace!" Mabel's indignant voice was heard. "You said half-past four, and it's five. Did you forget about me?"

Horace came in, and his jaw dropped.

"You here!" he gasped in astonishment.

"Certainly. I have waited for you a whole half hour."

Horace looked at me, and I grinned foolishly. A glimmering of the truth kept him silent. Mabel reached for her coat.

"If you can't even apologize, I think I shall go," she said severely.

It seemed to be up to me.

"I'm sorry you didn't like my party."

Mabel looked blankly from me to Ladd, bewildered.

He smiled, and, taking my cue, observed:

"You didn't know this is Gordon's studio? Mine is the one above—with a skylight. Didn't you know—honestly? I have been waiting for you—starving and thirsting for you, all this time."

She was in no mood for jest, and turned to me.

"You have tricked me very successfully. I should think you would be proud of yourself, to have taken such an advantage of me."

I bowed my head to the torrent of hot water I had foreseen. It scalded a good deal. And because it scalded I replied:

"Of course I apologize, but I had thought you were a good enough sport to take a joke. I am sorry I was mistaken."

She winced, and the tears came into her eyes.

Horace still stood in the doorway, grinning. I pawed the air shooingly in

his direction, and with a chuckling snort he disappeared.

"Mabel," I said earnestly, "it was pretty nearly beyond my strength to send you away by telling you. I have seen so little of you lately. I've been pretty unhappy."

"I suppose you faked that sore throat to work on my sympathies," she answered coldly.

"No, on my honor it is sore."

She gazed at me doubtfully.

"You consciously and deliberately took advantage of me."

"I admit it," I said—and played a daring card. "But before I took advantage consciously, you took possession unconsciously. The rigor of the game requires me to say—philopene!"

I held my breath, but a slow smile gradually dawned upon her face—a stormy sunrise, but genuine.

"Take care!" she warned.

"Give up!" I countered. "You not only took possession, but tea, and biscuits, and note paper, and a telephone call—a whole family of philopenes. Come—give up," I begged. "Giving is better than taking," I added incautiously.

"Better for you?" she flashed.

I felt curiously solemn.

"Yes, better for both of us," I answered quietly. "I want you to give me your whole heart, as I give you mine. Yet, too, I give you your choice whether I let you off, or whether I am to take the pound of flesh nominated in the bond—I mean the freedom to speak. Will you give, dear, or take?"

She looked at me, and her eyes swam in sudden tears. She buried her face on my shoulder.

"I can give, I suppose, but I think I want you to take—first. I've always wanted you to!"

I took a great many—and gave the same number.





FOR BOOK LOVERS

MR. A. T. QUILLER COUCH has written a very delightful book in "Brother Copas," published by Charles Scribner's Sons, though it is hardly likely to achieve a very wide popularity.

St. Hospital is a college of Noble Poverty, founded several centuries ago as a shelter for impoverished gentlemen; thoughtless people probably would call it an old man's home, and if they were asked to read a story, the scene of which is laid in such an environment, would shrug their shoulders and say they were not interested; but "Brother Copas" cannot be dismissed in this summary fashion. It is not the sordid tale that might be imagined.

The chief character of the book, the man whose name gives it the title, is a whimsical and lovable personality with a shrewd and homely wit, which gives spice and flavor to a wide learning and profound scholarship. Admirably contrasted to him is the master of St. Hospital, "a doctor of divinity in Dresden China" and of a saintliness delicately adjusted to a sinful world; he is more or less reminiscent of the cardinal in "The Turquoise Cup."

These two old men, moving through the squabbles and dissensions in the community life of St. Hospital, emphasizing a quaint old-world atmosphere, and mellowing its asperities by their humor and charm, combine to make a most interesting and attractive book. Their efforts are ably seconded by Corona, a delightful child full of original conceits, who comes to dwell with the old men and so engages their affections that her presence brings about a condition of genuine brotherly love.

We should say that "Brother Copas" is a book for those who will delight in its flavor of scholarship and artistic excellences rather than for the general reader.



Admirers of the late David Graham Phillips cannot read "The Grain of Dust," which D. Appleton & Co. has recently published, without a feeling of regret that those who controlled the story should have permitted it to be given to the public in its present state. It seems almost inconceivable that Mr. Phillips himself could have consented to such a disposition of his manuscript.

To be sure, there can be no possible ground for this conclusion other than what is furnished by a comparison of this book with "The Husband's Story," which immediately preceded it. There has been such a steady development in the quality of Mr. Phillips' craftsmanship in recent years as to indicate his pride in his work and his purpose to perfect it. He has made this so clear that he could hardly have dreamed of offering for publication an obviously unfinished piece of work like "The Grain of Dust."

There are in this all the elements of one of his characteristically strong, dramatic stories. Fred Norman is a personality that Mr. Phillips loved to depict, placed in the environment of New York's strenuous business life. Dorothy Hallowell is a typical Phillips woman; so is Josephine Burrows and Norman's married sister. But without the polishing and finishing which the story obviously needs and which the author must have designed, the story is

crude, amateurish, and, in purpose and movement, absurd.

If he had lived to do the work, Mr. Phillips would have made it the antithesis of these things.



Mr. Daniel Frohman speaks of his book, "Memoirs of a Manager," published by Doubleday, Page & Co., as "some random observations," adding that it is not "a literary presentment of ideas and criticisms of the stage and its people, but a statement of facts."

The general reader will doubtless find that for him the book's chief interest lies in the narration of facts concerning the personality of stage favorites, managers, and playwrights, whose names have been familiar to theatergoers for a generation; for to the uninitiated a peep behind the scenes is always fascinating.

But Mr. Frohman's estimate of his work is certainly a very modest one, for the book is bound to be of value to every sincere student of American drama. His observations are founded upon years of practical experience, close and critical study of conditions past and present, the changing and complex requirements of the drama, its structure, its laws, and its aims, and are illuminated by a keen analysis of the factors which make for success or failure, and of those qualities in plays which seem best adapted to please most of the people most of the time.

The chapters on "Observations on Stock Companies and the Star System," "Composition of Plays," "The A B C of the Playwright's Art," and "A Final Chapter on the Drama of Today" are specially interesting.



One of the best Western stories that have been published in a long time is John Fleming Wilson's "The Land Claimers," published by Little, Brown & Co.

It is a tale that is quite out of the ordinary in scene, substance, and treat-

ment. The atmosphere of the dank, chilly, gloomy forests along the Siletz River in western Oregon, where the fall of the rain seems unceasing, and tremendous gales roar through the great trees almost unintermittently, pervades the book. To this environment Mr. Wilson has admirably adapted the group of "homesteaders" who have taken up claims in these apparently inhospitable woods.

Sim Spencer, the San Francisco tough, who has been ordered by his doctor to seek a life in the open, guilelessly acquires a worthless claim on the Siletz River. His frail body holds an indomitable spirit, however, which works out salvation for himself and others. Sally McCarthy is a backwoods woman of a new type, and they are both characters who reflect great credit on their creator.

The rest of the group are skillfully contrasted people, and are far above the traditional types of customary fiction. They are real, human, and original. Mr. Wilson's work is fresh, sincere, and convincing, and he has constructed a story which is clear, terse, and dramatic.



Mary Dillon's new novel, "Miss Livingston's Companion," published by the Century Company, is a mild, inoffensive romance of the historical type. Like others of its class, it takes the village of New York for the scene of its action, and depicts with infinite elaboration of detail the brilliant social life of the early years of the nineteenth century.

Of course most of the famous historical and literary personages of the time are presented more or less intimately—and fictionally. Hamilton, Burr, Washington Irving, Fenimore Cooper, the Livingstons, and Tom Moore are among them. People have, it may be said parenthetically, differed a good deal as to Hamilton and Burr, but there can be no doubt of the usefulness of both to ambitious novelists.

The hero of the tale is Sir Lionel Marchmont, a young English visitor to

New York. He falls madly in love with a beautiful young French woman, who, he is given to understand, occupies a menial position as paid companion to Miss Livingston. It turns out, however, that the young nobleman has been imposed upon, and the poor dependent proves to be not only an heiress, but a lady as nobly born as Sir Lionel himself. The hoax has been delicately conceived and executed by New York's society women.

Though the treatment of the romance is archaic and the machinery creaks rather heavily, the book may prove interesting to the very young or the very old. It is in the uninteresting and uninspired class of "clean romance."



Doubleday, Page & Co. has published a novel by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes under the title of "Jane Oglander," which, we think, will add little to the author's reputation, whatever effect it may have on her purse.

The story leads up to a climax which has neither logic nor justice, besides being one both unpleasant and uninteresting; but at the opening it introduces a character which promises to be interesting, but which makes no appearance after the first chapter, and has absolutely no connection with the plot.

All of the other people are shadowy and unreal, especially the woman whose name gives the book its title, and the man, General Lingard, to whom she is engaged, but who is lured away by Athena Maule. The latter is the type of woman, dear to the heart of feminine novelists, whose physical charms are neutralized by their moral hideousness. If she was actually the sort of woman that Mrs. Lowndes would have us believe, it is difficult to understand how she could attract another woman such as the author has tried to make Jane Oglander. It needs something more than mere assertion to convince us that the two were warm friends.

So far as General Lingard is concerned, we are sure that no woman would waste a thought on him.

A little volume of poems by Hayden Sands, which has just been published by the De Mille Company under the title of "Lights and Shadows," is worth more than the passing attention that is bestowed upon customary books of verse.

If there were nothing else to be said of them than that there is a haunting, delightful music in the rhythm of almost every stanza in the collection, it would be enough. But there is, in addition to this, much more. Mr. Sands has expressed thought in his verses, and he has expressed it with genuine sincere poetic feeling.

The volume is in two parts, the first "Songs of Light" and the second "Songs of Eventide," both, however, pitched in the major rather than in the minor key.

Any one who considers himself a cynic on the subject of contemporary poetry ought to examine Mr. Sands' book with some care.



Important New Books.

"Members of the Family," Owen Wister, Macmillan Co.

"A Melody in Silver," Keene Abbott, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"Woman and Labor," Olive Schreiner, F. A. Stokes Co.

"Love Under Fire," Randall Parrish, A. C. McClurg & Co.

"The Moving Finger," E. Phillips Oppenheim, Little, Brown & Co.

"I Will Maintain," Marjorie Bowen, E. P. Dutton & Co.

"The Man With the Honest Face," Paul Wells, D. Appleton & Co.

"The Legacy," Mary S. Watts, Macmillan Co.

"Queed," Henry S. Harrison, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"The Way of a Woman," Rina Ramsay, Dodd, Mead & Co.

"The Very Little Person," Mary Heaton Vorse, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"The West in the East," Price Collier, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Miss Gibbie Gault," Kate L. Boshier, Harper & Bros.

"To Love and to Cherish," Eliza Calvert Hall, Little, Brown & Co.

"Keeping Up With Lizzie," Irving Bacheller, Harper & Bros.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

IN our talk with you last month we had a good deal to say in praise of this present number. We spoke pretty confidently of a couple of tales by writers new to AINSLEE'S "Her Chance" and "By the Sign that Conquered." We called your attention, not over modestly, to the fact that we were going to give you, all in one issue, stories that should be well worthy of such writers as Herman Whitaker, Fannie Heaslip Lea, Frank Condon, Norval Richardson, Churchill Williams, Georgia Wood Pangborn, Ellis Parker Butler, and Edna Kingsley Wallace. Over the complete novel by Margaretta Tuttle we fear we became downright boastful. Well, now that you have this number before you, don't you think we were really justified in everything we said?

If you do agree with us in what we said last month of this present AINSLEE'S it means a great deal to us—much more than the mere fact that you are enthusiastic about this particular number. It means that our tastes—yours and ours—are similar. It means that when we tell you we have a story which we consider unusually good, you can feel certain that you, too, will consider it unusually good. It means that when we tell you that we have found "Georgette" charming, fascinating, irresistible, you may rest assured that next month when you are introduced to her you, too, will find her charming, fascinating, irresistible.

We seem to be speaking of "Georgette" as though she were a real, live lady, rather than a complete novelette. Well, thanks to Marion Hill's wonderful characterization, she is a real, live lady. And although there are times when "Georgette" seems to possess more hearts than heart, she isn't all sparkle and froth by any means. There is a big, powerful life current running beneath the surface of her frivolity. However, there can be but one adequate description of "Georgette," and that is "Georgette" herself, by Marion Hill, in August AINSLEE'S.

WE are trying something of an experiment in this number. A friend said to us some time ago: "I always read AINSLEE'S on the train, and while I enjoy every bit of it, I find that the short stories stop at all the way stations, and that the complete novel is a little too long to read except at home. Can't you give us something in between these two lengths—something about as long as from New York to Morristown?"

To a leisurely reader on a fast train, we figured out, Morristown is about ten or fifteen thousand words from New York. "That puts it out of the question," was our first thought. Why? Because magazines have never been accustomed to print stories of just this length. Then we began to wonder why that should keep AINSLEE'S, which has done so many things that magazines have never been accustomed to do, from starting in, provided, of course, we could find really entertaining stories of this unusual length.

We were fortunate in our search. In this number you have read "Pilarcita," a delightful romance by Norval Richardson. Next month we have a mystery story, "Mrs. Peacock's Shop," by Kate Jordan. This is a trifle shorter than our estimate of the distance from New York to Morristown. But it is better to be on the safe side than to have our friend carried past his station. Within the next few months we are going to print stories of this short-story novelette length by such well-known writers as Marie Van Vorst, Burton E. Stevenson, and H. F. Prevost-Battersby. What's worth trying is worth trying well.



SPEAKING of things "that magazines have never been accustomed to do" brings to mind another matter in which we are far from orthodox. One of the best stories in this present number is "The Snow-blind Man," by George Hyde Preston.

"Snow in a July magazine!" gasps Maga-

zine Custom. "Impossible. Why, it's—it's untimely!"

In other words, if Magazine Custom had its choice between a great story that was unseasonable and a mediocre story that was seasonable, it would unhesitatingly give you the latter. We prefer giving you the very best to be had, irrespective of whether the cows are in the corn or the corn is in the cans. We believe that a good story is a good story, just as a great painting is a great painting, at any time and all times.

Can you imagine some mushroom millionaire looking up from his morning paper and saying to his wife: "Maria, it says we're going to have an early fall. We'd better have those Spanish 'old masters' taken down and get those Norwegian snow scenes out of storage. We wouldn't want to be caught by a sudden frost."

There's a touch of crispness to the weather as well as to the story in "A Modern Petruccio," by Andrew Soutar. We are going to print it in August AINSLEE'S.

To those who do not approve of our attitude toward timeliness it will be some satisfaction to know that David King's "The Dog at His Gate," which was announced for July, has appropriately found its way into the "dog days" number in spite of us.

CONSTANCE SKINNER will have a story called "The Law" in August AINSLEE'S. In our opinion it is even more powerful, more absorbing, more important than Miss Skinner's "Divorced" in the June number, or "A Man and His Mate" in the March number. "The Law" deals with one of the greatest problems in modern marriage, the difference in the man's viewpoint and the woman's viewpoint. It is more forceful and direct than any of the score or more articles that have been written recently on this subject, and it unquestionably fulfills the first

and most stringent of AINSLEE requirements: It is entertaining.

IT is hard, on the worst August days, to be amused with anything. At such times Frank Condon will be a big help. "An International Affair" is the title of his next contribution. Or, if you are more in the mood for it, you will find a dainty love story by Fannie Heaslip Lea. In "Galatea of the Roses" the heroine is brought to life by the twentieth-century Pygmalion who had first made her realize her lack of life. George Hibbard entertainingly tells how "The Cynic"—that is the title of the story—was cured of his cynicism. Carrington Phelps, who has at times given us charming love stories, and at other times stories with a strong dramatic quality, successfully combines the two in "The Girl of the Charnalette." William Bullock has a powerful little tale called "The Thief." Men can only admit the realism of it; women, perhaps, will understand it.

F. BERKELEY SMITH, whose work may well have brought the term "word-painting" back to its true meaning, contributes another of his richly colored stories, "By the Grace of Allah," to the August AINSLEE'S. The next of Elliott Flower's breezy Western yarns is "Applegate and Diana"; Jane W. Guthrie continues her entertaining bridge series with "Mrs. Rodney's Short Suit," and H. Addington Bruce concludes his remarkable "Adventurings in the Psychical."

In all, besides the novelette, the poetry, and the essays, there will be fourteen really entertaining short stories in this coming AINSLEE'S. As we look over the table of contents, we feel satisfied. We feel that we have succeeded in getting together a magazine that will make August seem a little less like August.



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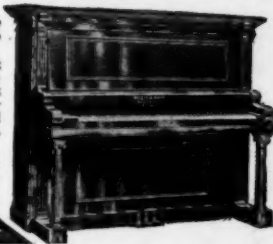
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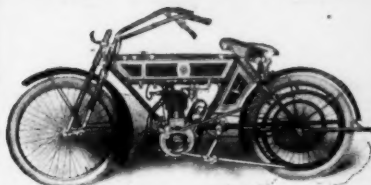
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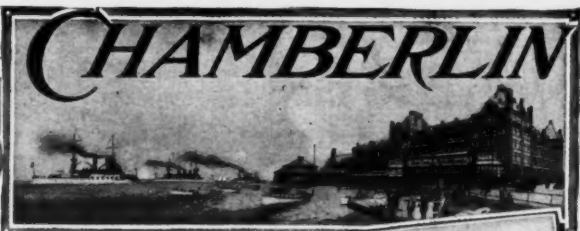
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The experts in the South illustrate the difference by showing four mules drawing two bales of cotton slowly over a poor, muddy cross-road, and two mules drawing eight bales of cotton rapidly over a first-class macadam highway.

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It is applied the same as other cleaning soaps, and then wiped off with a damp cloth. A clean, fresh surface is the result.

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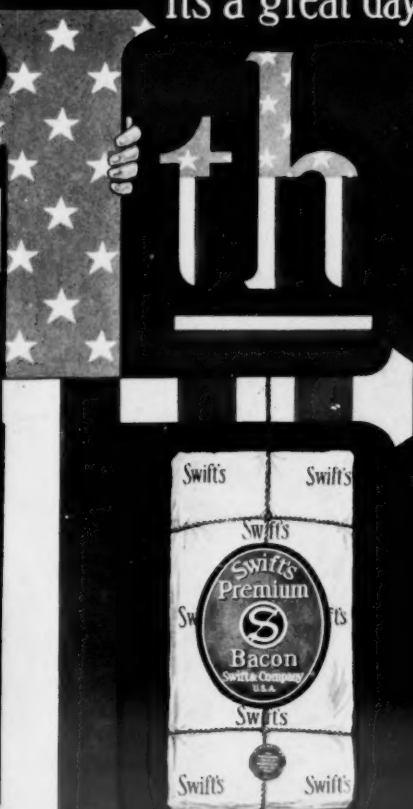
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